

World of professionals

By JIM CUTTING

Port Hope Bureau Chief

PORT HOPE — Interdesign 74, an experimental workshop which will bring 40 of the world's top industrial designers to the Port Hope-Cobourg area Aug. 17-31, has completed its general design brief the visiting designers to use as a basis for the two towns.

Interdesign, the first to be held in the western hemisphere, is seen as a case-study with far reaching implications for small communities across Canada and around the world.

Frank Dudas, managing director of the Interdesign workshop, stresses the designers are not coming to the Port-Hope-Cobourg area simply to talk and exchange ideas.

"They are coming, said Mr. Dudas, "to work together on a project which has excited world-wide interest. For two weeks, the designers will examine the problems faced by the Port Hope-Cobourg area, small communities within the orbit of the fast-growing metropolis of Toronto. They will study the human needs of the area and make recommendations on how it can best deal with the pressures of growth.

Mr. Dudas explained that Interdesign was "a new technique in design communications." He said the participants represent their professional associations in the various countries and are selected on the basis of their experience and contribution to the design profession.

The idea was conceived in 1970 by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) which has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

Interdesign 74 he describe as a "unique experiment in design," the first of its kind ever held in North America.

"When 40 of the world's top industrial designers turn their collective attention to the problems of these small communities," said Mr. Dudas.

"we can expect some dramatic results. We know these designers are going to look at the area with fresh eyes spark a lot of ideas, and produce hundreds of sketches and drawings to illustrate some new approaches for the future."

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

The participants will investigate the possibility of establishing new local industries through the application of industrial design, the extension of community services and amenities, and the improvement of the tourist and recreation economy.

Mr. Dudas said they would also look at the "cultural and historical assets and the preservation of rural areas.

"To give one example," he said, "they will look at how the railways have cut these communities off from the Lake Ontario waterfront, and what could be done to help them make fuller use of their water resources.

"Already, many local citizens have taken part in preparation for Interdesign 74," said Mr. Dudas.

"A comprehensive design brief, based on months of local research by members of the association of Canadian industrial designers, has been sent to each participant."

Mr. Dudas said the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers (ACID) believes this event will have an influence reaching far beyond the area of Port Hope and Cobourg.

"Some of the ideas generated here may well be implemented in small communities in Saskatchewan, in Japan, New Zealand or Idaho," he said.

The brief stresses that "the quality of life which people are going to enjoy in the future, depends on how well we understand the relationship between city, town and countryside, between the man-made and the natural environment."

Quoting from the book "Shape of Community" by Serge Chermayeff and Alexander Tzonis, it states: "my town — a place in which humanity becomes human, where people in their great diversity meet in concourse and reach their highest potential."

CONTROLLED GROWTH

The design brief brochure states that the objectives of Interdesign 74-Ontario "are to investigate areas of design and planning where industrial design can contribute to the concept of controlled community growth and to propose improvements for smaller communities.

The brief states that nearly 200 local individuals have committed themselves to some form of active participation in organizational, informational and other aspects of Interdesign.

The theme of "industrial design and small communities" was chosen by the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers because of its "universal nature." What is going on in the Port Hope - Cobourg area is happening in many other parts of Canada and in countries all around the world where the pressures of industrialization and urban growth are a part of every-day life.

The brief says Interdesign 74 is an "opportunity and challenge to members of the

coming to heal the Lakeshore's 'sores'



THE INTERDESIGN TEAM: Steve Laskoski

(left) environment; Bob Kaiser, community activi-

ties; Sid Gibson, manufactur-

ing; Vello Hubel, recreation and tourism; Bert Bobrovniczky, services.

industrial design profession to introduce their skills to new areas of interest and a chance to explore ways to use the analytical methods of industrial design to solve problems relating to broad community needs."

The shape of it will be moulded by the participants. How the designers respond to the problems of the area will depend upon many factors, including their own professional experience, how well they are able to communicate with the

community and understand its needs, hopes and aspirations.

Interdesign participants will express ideas and conclusions in visual form as well as produce written recommendations. The form the recommendations take is entirely open. Within a few months after Interdesign '74 an illustrated report will be published detailing the work of the participants, the methods of working, visual expression of ideas, and recommendations. The report will be distributed world-wide. Other documentation will include film and video tape recordings.

The brief points out that since the advent of the railway, more than a century ago, the two towns "have turned their backs to the waterfront and it has been allowed to become largely a wasteland."

The brief states that along the waterfronts there are conflicts of interest and of jurisdiction. The railway has shown little interest in earning for the land under their control.

It also notes the towns do not have jurisdiction over their own harbors and waterfront. Lake Ontario it explains, is a navigable waterway (part of the St. Lawrence Seaway handling ocean-going vessels) and falls within federal government responsibility.

One of the weaknesses of Port Hope and Cobourg, brought out in the brief is a lack of informational signage and information services generally.

"Each community tries to handle its own information for tourists and the result is poor communication with visitors," states the brief. "This means people do not find out about places of interest which might keep them in the area for a longer period. Some consideration needs to be given to the advantage of comprehensive information services linking the whole area."

The report notes the two communities are only 10 kilometres apart with no local bus service connecting them. It points out that while an in-

ter-city bus service stops at both towns on its way through, the lack of a regular community bus service linking local services adds to the isolation of people, particularly the elderly. It also notes that no regular public transport exists in Hope and Hamilton Townships.

The brief points out that while Port Hope and Cobourg once were busy ports, today the harbors are little-used because of the shallow depth available and there are no passenger boat services available. A new cruise ship between Toronto and Montreal has no intermediary ports of call.

The brief disclosed that a hovercraft service, which overcomes the problems of shallow water, plans to begin operation between various towns and cities on the Great Lakes. It adds, however, that little has been done by either government or private industry to investigate other modern forms of water transportation such as hydrofoils on Lake Ontario.

Concerning recreation and

tourism, the Interdesign introduction brief notes that although the Port Hope-Cobourg area is officially designated as part of the Great Pine Ridge Tourist Area, it lacks a "recognizable image and at present must be considered a "secondary tourist region".

The brief says the approach from Lake Ontario is "depressing" with a complete lack of facilities. The current emphasis is on the tourist who arrives by automobile. Present promotion efforts seem to be inadequate to change the flow or quality of tourist.

Facilities are rather basic and "inadequate", states the brief. "With one or two notable exceptions, most of the restaurants fall below levels acceptable to visitor from the larger centres."

Accommodations are often commonplace and ordinary. Lack of a tourist information system and tourist aids do nothing to encourage the visitor to stay.

No regional foods or special products, no local tourist souvenirs tempt the visitor to spend his money, nor does local entertainment cater to the tourist.

The report concludes that as the area offers an attractive environment for those who like the outdoors and for those with an interest in history, it would seem prudent to foster a better quality of visitor, rather than merely an increase in numbers. Large numbers of visitors could destroy the character of the area. A qualitative approach could help maintain its nature.

The brief observes that while a wide variety of recreational activities is available in the area, from fishing to team sports, some needed facilities are lacking, such as indoor public swimming pools.

It also notes there is a need for more play environments and adventure playgrounds for the very young. It states facilities for teenagers and the elderly should be brought up-to-date. It contends the young are restless because of the limited public entertainment available, especially in the evenings.

"For many," said the report, "there is nowhere to go and nothing to do."