

# Greener Tenants Lead to Greener Owners

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The modern concept of green eco-friendly buildings started in the late '80's and was viewed as a 'boutique' concept. Now just a few short years later the idea has gone mainstream. Green is the hot topic; just look at the agenda for any real estate conference, trade show or publication. Everyone is green, going green, or will be green, which has resulted in a new term...green-washing. How can you really verify that an organization's claim is valid? Third-party validation of environmental declarations for buildings or products, is the key to knowing that the claims being made have been verified.

For buildings in Canada there are a variety of certification options that exist depending on the building type. For existing buildings, many projects are certifying under the Building Owners and Managers Association's (BOMA) Go Green\* or Go Green Plus\* Programs. These online, survey-based, certification programs provide a framework for greening building opera-

tions and maintenance activities. The key for any building owner or manager is to understand the scope of your project and use the most appropriate tool to evaluate it. As of the fall of 2007 there are 300 (will get exact number) buildings certified as Go Green or Go Green Plus.

BOMA has also worked closely with Public Works and Government Services Canada which adopted BOMA Canada's Go Green Plus\* Program as the official national environmental program for existing Federal Government buildings in Canada.

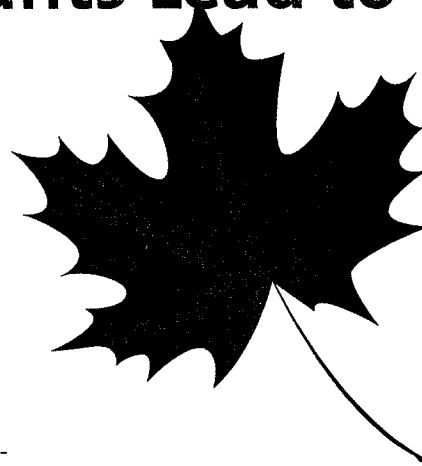
The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED\*) Green Building Rating System was one of the first systems developed. It was originally developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) and is licensed to the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC). LEED\* has a number of products with varying scopes and it is important to understand the differences in order to increase your chances of successfully certifying your project.

A company's office space is representative of their corporate culture and as a result tenants are seeking lease space that is more environmentally responsible. Perhaps a tenant wants to pursue a certification for their specific fit-up project or they are looking to provide better indoor environments for their employees. The discerning tenant is now asking which building gives them the greatest opportunity to achieve their specific corporate goals. Building owners and property management firms are now being asked new questions and must be prepared to provide potential tenants with information about their building's environmental performance.

If a prospective tenant starts asking about specific environmental building issues there is a good possibility they may be planning a green fit-up under a tool like LEED\* for Commercial Interiors. Selecting a LEED\* certified property can help a tenant achieve their goal, but if you don't have a LEED building, all is not lost. The key is to document the green features that your building does provide so that the tenant can use that information. For example, if you retrofitted all of the common washrooms, showers and janitorial closet water fixtures with low-flow fixtures, then the tenant can benefit from that change when applying for certification for their project.

Programs like Go Green Plus also help owners document the changes that they have made. Highlighting these features in a Tenant Design and Construction Guideline document is one way of presenting this information.

When it comes to green, the key is third party certification. To attract tenants you want to provide proof that the changes you have made to your existing building, or the claims you are making about your new building, are valid. In the end it is the right thing to do and you can be confident when you say that you own or operate a better building.



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