



Canada: An Opportunity to LEED the Green Building Movement

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Background

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard, or LEED, as it is commonly known, is gaining momentum in Canada and appears to be shaping the direction of new environmental standards for the construction industry. Originally conceived by the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED has made its way north and is being promoted by the Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC), which is currently in the process of expanding the breadth of the standards and adjusting them to the particularities of the Canadian environment. LEED provides guidelines and standards that must be met by developers in order to certify a building as “green” (LEED certified). Today, there are only about 3,600 LEED Accredited Professionals in Canada, to the United States’ estimated 43,000, but the number is growing fast, and demand for green building experts is on the rise.

Part of the stimulus of the green movement stems from a finding that more than a third of total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada are produced by residential, commercial and institutional buildings. In an attempt to contribute to the fight against global warming and environmental degradation, the CaGBC has set aggressive goals for Canada aimed at lessening harmful emissions: by the year 2015, the council hopes to be able to label 100,000 buildings and one million homes as “green.”

Currently, the CaGBC is in the process of developing the next generation of LEED in Canada. The most anticipated business sector inclusion in the new version is LEED for Homes, which is scheduled for launch in the spring of 2009. While the standard is being tested and reviewed, according to the CaGBC, the finished product is expected to resemble U.S. LEED for Homes. When it is released, the unveiling of the Canadian standard for green homes will provide the CaGBC with the toolkit necessary to begin achieving its aggressive objectives.

The Canadian government is supportive of the green movement in construction and the initiative to reduce greenhouse gases. Incentives and subsidies, however, thus far have not been abundant, due in large part to the lack of national standards for green construction. The solidification of LEED in Canada finally offers the government an avenue to pursue its environmental sustainability agenda in the private field in a structured way.

Implications and Opportunities for U.S. Firms

The developments in the Canadian green construction industry present a unique opportunity for U.S. companies that cater to green construction and design. Canadian experience in green building lags that of the United States, thus Canada will look to the U.S. for professional services and product supplies.

LEED is intended to be an international standard, and, according to the CaGBC Manager of Communication and Marketing, Nancy Grenier, LEED Accredited Professionals are tested on the “same core content” in the U.S. and Canada, and “Accredited Professionals from the States are recognized [in Canada].”

Opportunities are present for U.S. exporters such as developers, consultancies and architectural firms that specialize in green construction, as well as green building material suppliers. Companies that can find a way to introduce themselves to Canadian firms over the next few years will be entering a growth industry in an increasingly environmentally-conscious country and may benefit in the future from the first-mover advantage.

The CaGBC's website provides a powerful tool for suppliers of green materials. The website hosts a database of Canada-wide registered LEED construction projects where builders usually register for LEED before tender offers for materials are submitted. Therefore, new additions to the registry represent potential customers for green building suppliers. The database sorts the registered projects with respect to the date of filing – those which have been posted within the last month are likely to be open to tender bids.

The list of LEED registered projects can be found at:
http://www.cagbc.org/leed_canada/registered_projects.php

Further information on LEED in Canada is available from the Canadian Green Building Council:

Phone: 1-866-941-1184

Website: www.cagbc.org

Resources & Contacts

Daily Commercial News
The Toronto Star
Canadian Green Building Council
United States Green Building Council

For More Information

The U.S. Commercial Service in Toronto, Canada can be contacted via e-mail at: ruth.williamson@mail.doc.gov;
Phone: (416) 595-5412, ext. 238; Fax: (416) 595-5419; or visit our website: www.buyusa.gov/canada.

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