

FAQ: Registering a project with the CaGBC or the USGBC

June 2011 (updated September 2011)

Can Canadians choose to use rating systems developed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC)?

Can Canadian projects use rating systems developed by the USGBC when there is no equivalent LEED Canada rating system?

Will the CaGBC release Canadian versions of the USGBC's LEED for Retail, LEED for Healthcare and LEED for Schools?

Will the CaGBC implement a LEED Volume Program in Canada?

Will the CaGBC release a version of LEED for Neighborhood Development (ND)?

I have heard of some mid-rise home projects that are registering with the USGBC. Is this allowed?

Can Canadians choose to use rating systems developed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC)?

Canadian projects cannot register to use a USGBC rating system when an equivalent CaGBC rating system is available. More specifically, projects wishing to certify under the following rating systems must register and certify using the LEED Canada version:

- *LEED for New Construction and Major Renovations (NC)*
- *LEED for Core & Shell Development (CS)*
- *LEED for Commercial Interiors (CI)*
- *LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance (EB:O&M)*
- *LEED for Homes*

The CaGBC has adapted the above rating systems in order to better address the needs of Canadian project teams. The Canadian adaptations are tailored specifically for Canadian climates, construction practices, standards, programs and regulations. LEED Canada rating systems are available in both English and French, and the certification process is fully supported in both official languages. The CaGBC adapted the above rating systems as they have the widest applicability.

Can Canadian projects use rating systems developed by the USGBC when there is no equivalent LEED Canada rating system?

Yes. Specifically, Canadian projects may register under the USGBC's *LEED for Retail (NC)*, *LEED for Retail (CI)*, *LEED for Healthcare* or *LEED for Schools* rating systems through the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI), as there is no equivalent LEED Canada rating system available through the CaGBC.

Alternatively, Canadian projects may choose to register their project with the CaGBC and certify their retail, healthcare or school project under an existing LEED Canada rating system (e.g., *LEED Canada NC 2009*). There are many school, retail and healthcare projects that have successfully



certified their buildings under various LEED Canada rating systems. Note that *LEED Canada NC 2009* and *LEED Canada CS 2009* include interpretations for specific building types, and the database of Credit Interpretation Requests (CIRs) continues to grow and provide additional guidance for projects. This is especially true for school projects: the USGBC's *LEED for Schools* was part of the *LEED for Building Design and Construction Reference Guide 2009*, along with *LEED NC* and *LEED CS*. Although the CaGBC was unable to adapt the *LEED for Schools Rating System*, school pathways and references were included wherever easily incorporated (e.g., a school bus system is allowed to count for one bus line under Public Transportation Access). The CaGBC encourages projects to submit a CIR if they wish to use an alternative compliance path on individual credits.

LEED Canada rating systems are tailored to the Canadian market and are overall much easier to use for Canadian projects than the USGBC rating systems. When the CaGBC adapts a USGBC rating system, Canadian standards, regulations and programmes are referenced; imperial measurements are converted to metric; and in some cases, requirements are adapted or changed to better serve our climate and/or regional context. It is recognized that users of the LEED Canada rating systems have become very knowledgeable in these systems, have developed specific areas of LEED Canada expertise and have acquired a great deal of experience in using LEED Canada reference guides, CIRs, applications guides, etc.

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with registering with the GBCI or the CaGBC, some of which are highlighted below:

Advantages of registering a retail, healthcare or school project with the GBCI under the USGBC's *LEED for Retail*, *LEED for Healthcare* or *LEED for Schools* rating systems.

- Rating systems were developed specifically for retail, healthcare and school facilities - the credit structures and point weightings are better suited for these building types. Note that this is less of a concern for school projects due to the strong alignment with *LEED Canada NC 2009* and the incorporation of some of the school options included in *LEED Canada NC 2009*.

Disadvantages of registering a retail, healthcare or school project with the GBCI under the USGBC's *LEED for Retail*, *LEED for Healthcare* or *LEED for Schools* rating systems.

- Rating systems do not reference Canadian programmes, standards or regulations.
- Rating systems do not provide metric equivalencies.
- Rating systems and certification support are only available in English.
- LEED consultants and other project team members are more familiar with the LEED Canada rating systems. It may take some time for them to familiarize themselves with the requirements of the USGBC rating systems.

Will the CaGBC release Canadian versions of the USGBC's *LEED for Retail*, *LEED for Healthcare* and *LEED for Schools*?

Due to the limited number of these project types in Canada and the need to balance our resources to best serve our membership, the CaGBC will not adapt the 2009 versions of the USGBC's *LEED for*

Retail, LEED for Healthcare or LEED for Schools rating systems. Canadian retail, healthcare and schools projects are welcome to use the current LEED Canada rating systems or register with the GBCI for these rating systems.

Will the CaGBC implement a LEED Volume Program in Canada?

In the fall of 2010 the USGBC launched their LEED Volume Program for Design and Construction, and in 2011 a program for Operations and Maintenance. The LEED Volume Program provides a streamlined certification path for organizations planning to certify a large number of projects.

The CaGBC has evaluated the program and determined it to be sound. However it requires an entirely distinct certification process, one which the CaGBC is not in a position to replicate given the relatively small number of organizations in Canada that would benefit from this program (it requires at least 25 buildings to be certified in a 3-year period). Organizations interested in pursuing volume certification for Canadian projects have the option to register with the USGBC. Participating projects will have to follow the USGBC rating systems. As there are some differences between USGBC and CaGBC rating systems, potential applicants should carefully evaluate their situation before pursuing volume certification.

The LEED Volume program is only available for the following USGBC rating systems:

- LEED 2009 for New Construction and Major Renovations
- LEED 2009 for Commercial Interiors
- LEED 2009 for Retail: New Construction and Major Renovations
- LEED 2009 for Retail: Commercial Interiors
- LEED 2009 for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance

Will the CaGBC release a version of *LEED for Neighborhood Development (ND)*?

The CaGBC is working with the USGBC to develop Alternative Compliance Paths (ACPs) for Canadian neighbourhood development projects wishing to pursue LEED certification. The Alternative Compliance Paths will provide alternative credit requirements that reference Canadian regulations, programs, and standards.

The CaGBC is collaborating with the GBCI to develop a partnership that will allow the Canadian Alternative Compliance Paths to be made available through the GBCI; under this arrangement. Canadian projects interested in pursuing *LEED ND* would register with the GBCI. When Canadian ACPs for *LEED ND* are available, the CaGBC membership will be notified.

I have heard of some mid-rise home projects that are registering with the USGBC. Is this allowed?

The USGBC offers the *LEED for Homes* Mid-rise Program for the residential portion of housing projects that are between 4 and 6 storeys tall. Homes in Canada can follow this program through their LEED Canada for Homes Provider. More information is available at www.cagbc.org/homes.