

## GREEN IS GOLD

Green construction in BC sounds like a guide to building a grow op you might find on the internet. Actually, you'll find that green construction is easier and more profitable than that grow op could ever be. So, what is it?

Green construction is a rethinking of how we build our world around us. It isn't a new way to swing a hammer but rather, how we get to hammer and nails. It comes down to an increased responsibility and involvement in the materials and techniques we choose. "Where does that come from, and where does it go?" are the two questions we need to ask ourselves when making those choices. How are we changing the community we're building in and how do we fit into that community? I know, sounds like your high school guidance councillor or talk around the drumming circle, and maybe that grow op is starting to sound a whole lot more interesting right now. Going green seems like a huge undertaking and, it is, but it also breaks down into easy choices. Huge undertakings are nothing new to construction; we do build arenas, hospitals, dams, generating sites, and massive high rise buildings. None of these things are small or simple and everyday they get built in BC on schedule and on budget. So, what can you do? Reduce.

Reduce waste, reduce cost, reduce our carbon footprint and reduce liability. Of course it isn't that straight forward and there are a lot of questions to ask along the way. The first question, and the easiest to answer, is why. There are three answers to that; health, community and profitability. Talking about the health of the planet is a

little abstract, so let's start with your health.

Green construction means a reduced risk to the builder. Reducing exposure to potentially harmful chemicals and gases from materials and finishes. Reducing stresses and cost to the end users. Reducing exposure, difficulty and time wasted to the demolition team. Healthy builders, healthy buildings, healthy community. Green construction is more than environmental concerns, it is social concerns too. The communities we work in are the communities we belong to. Green construction is a demonstration of our commitment to our communities and a way to improve our quality of life in them. Sounds good, sounds reasonable, sounds expensive.

Improvements usually mean increased cost, and quality of life often has a price tag attached to it, so let's get back to reducing. Reducing waste is the ultimate goal of green construction. That means reduced cost. For developers, a building that generates a portion or all of its electricity is easier to sell and cheaper to use. For the contractor, green products use less and you'll throw away less, especially money. For the public, green construction is more attractive to live with and more attractive to have a career in. For everyone it means more work and more money in your pocket.

This is all still a little abstract, so let's make it real. All new government buildings must be LEED gold certified. LEED certification is a means to the green construction end. It is a collection of best

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practices and state-of-the-shelf technology. LEED is easy to learn, easy to incorporate into your business and into your thinking. It is the way things are going to be built in Canada. LEED is saying what you're doing, doing what you say, and being able to prove it. LEED projects need LEED accredited professionals. Find more about LEED from your local association or from the Green Building Council of Canada (<http://www.CAGBC.org>). The goal of LEED and green construction is to reduce your carbon footprint.

Your "Carbon Footprint", is another term we're hearing more and more. It is a broad term for the impact on the environment from your carbon emissions. Carbon emissions are the contributions you make to climate change through the increase in greenhouse gases. Emissions come from your daily operations, not only exhaust from an engine, but from the materials and finishes used. They come from the production and eventually the destruction and decomposition of materials and products. Carbon footprints include the power that you use to run the drill or the lights on a site. It includes the exhaust from the plane you took to a meeting or the container you didn't recycle from lunch. It's always going to be expensive and it's going to get more expensive. Reducing your carbon footprint equals reducing your costs. Not only the financial cost but the energy cost too. Getting ahead on green construction will give you the advantage you'll need in the near future. The sooner you understand going green, the sooner you can react and profit from new regulations and new requirements in construction. There are tools and training to help you go green. Green practices and resources are being developed by the BCCA. New information will soon be there for contractors and developers. The best place to start, though, is in your home and in your own business.

Try changing three things for three months to see the differ-

ence. Here are a few suggestions, they aren't new, they aren't dramatic and they aren't hard.

- ⇒ Shut it off: Turn your engine off if you aren't going anywhere. Bring in an anti-idling policy in your company. You can reduce a quarter to a third of your fuel consumption by turning off your engine while idling. Cold mornings? Install an electric heater in the cab, or share a ride to work. Find ways to buy less fuel at home and at work.
- ⇒ Pack a lunch: We all have to eat but take a look at what you eat. You don't have to overhaul your diet. For one lunch per week pick something that is locally grown or produced. Pick something that has less packaging or packaging that can be easily recycled and recycle it. Adopt a pack it in, pack it out policy. Just like camping, if you brought it there, you take it away. You'll get a clear idea of how much waste there is from only one meal a week.
- ⇒ Turn on the bright lights: when it comes time to change the light bulb, choose high efficiency lighting. They might be more expensive at first, but a bulb that lasts three times as long means three fewer bulbs produced, changed and thrown out. Check with your utility provider for recycling or incentive programs.

None of these things are new; in fact they're ideas that have been around for over 10 years now. Turning off your engine will show long term savings in your wallet. Packing a locally grown or produced lunch will connect you with your community and improve your health. Choosing energy efficient lighting will save you time, energy and money. Make three choices for three months and see how it will affect how you think and how you build. In green construction, green is gold.



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The mission of the BCCA is to provide leadership and excellence in the representation of and service to British Columbia's construction industry.