



## Leaders Call for Inclusive LEED Forest Certification Credit

Canadian and Australian leaders are among those calling on the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to ensure forest certification benchmarks for the certified wood credit in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating tool recognize all credible third-party forest certification programs. The Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC) follows the direction of the USGBC on this issue, so whatever is decided for the LEED rating tools under USGBC will also apply to LEED rating tools in Canada.

Many of the letters to the USGBC note that the current preference for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is biased against forest products from North America. More than three quarters of North America's certified forests meet Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) forest standards – the three programs certify forests exclusively in the United States and Canada. More than 60 percent of FSC-certified lands are outside of North America.

Using domestic products is especially important for government agencies, which have a responsibility to deliver economic benefits to communities across the United States, as well as meeting environmental goals. There are more than 1,800 LEED projects registered or certified with the CaGBC, and many are government-owned or occupied buildings.

Many influential organizations have an inclusive approach to forest certification. Public Works and Government Services Canada requires all wood products used in its building projects to be certified to SFI, FSC or CSA.<sup>1</sup> In its Environmental Claims: A Guide for Industry and Advertisers, the Competition Bureau of Canada encourages consumers and businesses to look for forest products "that were certified to a sustainable forest management standard".<sup>2</sup>

In 2008, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers issued A Statement on Forest Certification Standards in Canada saying governments in Canada accept that the SFI, CSA and FSC forest standards "demonstrate, and promote the sustainability of forest management practices in Canada".<sup>3</sup> EcoLogo, an initiative owned by Environment Canada and managed by TerraChoice Environmental Marketing, says SFI, CSA and FSC are designed to provide consumers with independent, third-party assurance of sustainable forest management, ethical behaviour and adherence to laws at all points along the product value chain.<sup>4</sup> In its 2009 Seven Sins of Greenwashing report, TerraChoice included the SFI label among 14 labels it found to be "legitimate". In its EcoMarkets Summary Report 2009, TerraChoice found that procurement specialists in North America reaffirmed that the SFI label is among their top 10 recognized or used eco-labels.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Works and Government Services Canada Questions and Answers <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/biens-property/questions-eng.html>

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Claims: A Guide for Industry and Advertisers [www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/02700.html](http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/02700.html)

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Statement on Forest Certification Standards in Canada [http://www.ccfm.org/pdf/CCFM\\_Statement\\_FRandEN.pdf#page=2](http://www.ccfm.org/pdf/CCFM_Statement_FRandEN.pdf#page=2)

<sup>4</sup> Environment Canada Green Buying: Guide to Ecolabels [www.ec.gc.ca/education/default.asp?lang=en&n=743D106D-1](http://www.ec.gc.ca/education/default.asp?lang=en&n=743D106D-1)

The Green Building Council of Australia, which works closely with USGBC, announced in late 2009 that its green building rating tool would give equal consideration to forest certification standards accepted by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes in addition to FSC. The SFI Standard is endorsed by PEFC. The Council had faced intense pressure from governments and unions to be more inclusive, and acted quickly.

## **Leaders Speak Out to USGBC on Wood and Forest Certification**

### **Québec, Canada: Richard Savard, le sous-ministre associé, Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune (Jan. 28, 2010 letter to USGBC, translated from French)**

“With regard to forest certification, we believe that recognition of all internationally recognized standards would be favourable to the development of green building. In our view, the various certification standards are not recognized to their true value. In fact, your system for evaluating certification standards . . . seems unnecessarily complex. This system could be simplified which would improve its efficiency. Indeed, businesses that invest time and money to continually improve the forest practices should obtain recognition of their certification process that can only contribute towards sustainable forest management.”

### **Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, Chair Kathy Dunderdale (Dec. 2, 2009 letter to USGBC)**

“The draft benchmarks recently circulated for comment are so detailed and prescriptive that they would likely exclude most credible forest certification programs – even including several regional, national or interim FSC standards currently recognized in LEED. . . . The environmentally preferable, as well as administratively more manageable, solution is for the USGBC to recognize all credible forest certification programs, namely the Canadian Standards Association Z809 standard, the Forest Stewardship Council, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and national standards around the world independently endorsed by the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification.”

### **Canada: Jim Farrell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Forest Service (November 2009 letter to USGBC)**

“Governments in Canada take the position that, if forest certification standards are to evaluate forest management, the standards should reflect a balance of interests, be objective and scientifically-based, be easily implemented, practical and cost effective, and be consistent with national and international agreements related to sustainable forest management. The federal and provincial/territorial governments in Canada recognize that the CSA, the FSC and the SFI all meet these criteria. Governments in Canada accept that these standards demonstrate and promote the sustainability of forest management practices in Canada.”

### **British Columbia, Canada: Pat Bell, Minister of Forests and Range (Nov. 4, 2009 letter to USGBC)**

“Wood products, despite being environmentally preferable to concrete and steel, are being perversely held to a higher standard than those other materials. By requiring environmental certification for wood, but not for competing products, the LEED standard is already putting wood at an illogical disadvantage. I encourage you to ensure your benchmarks are fair and objective. I also encourage you to promote building rating systems based on independent, life-cycle assessments and to recognize all bona fide, forest-certification systems, including, for example, the Canadian Standards Association Z809 Standard, the four FSC standards in Canada (British Columbia, Boreal, Maritimes, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence-Laurentian) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative standard.”

**Canadian Institute of Forestry – Institut forestier du Canada: Anne LeBrun Ruff, RPF, President, and John F. Pineau, Executive Director (April 19, 2010 letter to USGBC)**

“It concerns the CIF/IFC that non-forestry organizations such as USGBC are developing independent criteria/benchmarks to assess forest products as coming from sustainably managed forests. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers and the international community, through mechanisms such as the Montreal and Pan European Processes, have already established criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. It is these widely accepted, international criteria that the Canadian Standards Association and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative are built on. The work has been done, and is continually being reviewed.”

**Australia: Primary Industries Ministerial Council of Australia (Nov. 7, 2009 statement)<sup>5</sup>**

State, territorial and federal ministers said in a statement that the Australian Forestry Certification Scheme recognizes good sustainable forestry practices and that the Green Building Council of Australia should recognize it in addition to FSC. They supported a Victorian government proposal to require government-endorsed procurement and sustainability guidelines to give equal recognition to credible forestry certification schemes.

**Australia: Michael O’Connor, Assistant National Secretary, Construction, Forestry, Mining, Energy Union (Nov. 19, 2009 media statement)<sup>5</sup>**

“Domestic timber that is harvested according to sustainable world’s best practice must be able to compete with overseas products. The union is tired of seeing job losses around the country as a result of this unrepresentative organization and its absurd accreditation system. Currently multi-million-dollar contracts are being lost by Australian companies for no good reason.”

**Green Building Rating Tools and Certification**

Many tools are available to help builders and consumers make decisions about green building products. These include comprehensive rating systems in Canada that know certified wood is an excellent choice for green building, and encourage its use by recognizing credible forest certification programs.

For residential construction, Built Green™ Canada promotes green building practices to reduce the impact that building has on the environment. For commercial construction, the Green Building Initiative’s Green Globes™ green building assessment and rating system promotes building practices, resulting in energy-efficient, healthier and environmentally sustainable buildings.

Rating systems in other countries that recognize credible certification programs include the ANSI National Green Building Standard in the United States, the Green Building Council of Australia and BREEAM in England.

**For more information:**

The SFI program has created a page on its website with resources related to the USGBC and the forest certification benchmarks. Visit <http://sfiprogram.org/LEED/> for the latest news, letters of support and useful links.

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<sup>5</sup> The Green Building Council of Australia has announced equal consideration in its green building rating tool for standards accepted by PEFC as well as FSC standards. SFI and CSA standards are accepted by PEFC.