

## **A brief history of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification in Nova Scotia Schools**

<https://www.environmentalhealth.ca/fall08ScentFreeGreen.html> This article on Scent -Free programs was an early indication that LEED was willing to adapt.

Halifax West High School was built following guidelines compiled by the Healthy Schools Construction Committee, an inter-departmental committee (NS departments of Education and Transportation Public Works) with two CASLE representatives, Hum and Robinson (chair). They were used in the design and construction of the Province's first, benchmark, Healthy School. During the two years after Halifax West was built ~90% of these Healthy Schools Design and Construction Guidelines (HSG) were integrated into the Provincial Design Requirements Manual DC350 to benefit all new public buildings in Nova Scotia.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification was adopted for all NS new buildings ~ 2003 in a NS government Cabinet decision, promoted by the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Department (TIR). CASLE and the Dept. of Education were caught by surprise in mid-stride as they sought to have all new provincial buildings in NS to be Healthy Buildings, and to focus on the Healthy Schools Guidelines.

The successes at Sir John A MacDonald High School and others that followed Halifax West led local LEED practitioners to foster several changes to LEED checklists, including making operable windows a checklist item as well as Scent-free programs. These are examples of changes CASLE had continued to work for. Another was to improve the LEED IAQ/building-readiness process to match the HSG.

LEED proponents insisted the LEED program would create healthy AND green buildings. However, Robinson could see the shortcomings of the LEED program regarding Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) – they fell well short of the HSG. Thus began a new struggle.

Robinson was hired by the Department of Education as Healthy Schools consultant for the next new schools. However, for the new Citadel High School, it became an exercise in trying to stay ahead of the LEED proposals which were being championed by the designers and builders. In practice, the excitement over LEED possibilities seemed to give it precedence when new school design and construction decisions were being made, seemingly in between meetings because Robinson attended all planning meetings and only stumbled across the situation late in the process.

Based on the huge success of the HSG at Halifax West, the Province's benchmark Healthy school, and subsequent Healthy Schools built around the province, we hoped to see another great gain for Healthy Schools at Halifax's new Citadel High School. That Robinson was hired as hands-on Healthy School guide for the project, and that Robinson and a TIR architect wrote for Citadel High the first Specifications for the process for building-readiness that were included in any school's official Specifications, were also significant. However, TIR/TPW chose to use the LEED guideline instead without telling the Dept of Education or Robinson, who protested, warning of potential outcomes if the

HSG specifications were not followed. It was discovered too late to revert to the HSG. Robinson was asked to wait and see, because, as they said, surely LEED would know what would work.

The next several years after Citadel opened, Robinson focused on finding medical help for the many students and staff who were harmed by the botched and inadequate building-readiness process. Robinson served as a consultant for two NS Human Rights cases involving teachers who became ill in this event, and she was an invited speaker at several international IAQ and engineering conferences where she outlined what LEED needed to do to serve buildings and people better. She shared the facts about several Certified LEED buildings in NS that were not built on time, or on budget, were energy pigs, and were making people sick. She met engineers and architects from across the continent at these conferences who were relieved to be vindicated and wanted to work with her to improve the situation that in some significant ways, the Emperor had no clothes. Yet, all the LEED PR continued to promote the ideals and successes without mentioning the failures. As mentioned, LEED continued to work to improve their program.

Robinson supported BOMA and some new programs that did not have the same PR power but seemed to be doing a better job on the ground. A new CASLE board member, Jon Stone, was an Atlantic Canada project manager for the Federal Government and he was able to influence changes. In recent years, the NS government and Federal Government have adopted programs that are showing features and flexibility that so far seem to be serving the Green/Healthy and financial goals.