



INTOUCH

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IN8 Design

INTERIOR DESIGN CONSULTANTS

## Just Alphabet Soup? Or Should You Pay Attention?

LEED®, LEED® AP, CaGBC, GBCI, and now LEED® GA, LEED® ID+C ... Yes, they are about green building design and green building designers, but what do they really mean to you?

You probably already know that aside from the obvious environmental benefits, there are many reasons for going green. It may be important for you to be in step with the sustainable measures your own customers and prospective customers may be taking. Today's job candidates are concerned about the environmental stance of potential employers. A green office is good for morale, too.

**So what about all those letters?** Whether seeking LEED® certification or just ensuring you are taking a sound approach to sustainable design with as much preparation as possible, you must engage the right consultants with the right qualifications. The 'green' qualifications – those letters – are changing.

Until January 2010, Canadian interior designers who had earned the designation LEED® Accredited Professional (signifying completion of an extensive study program) were governed by the Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC). But last year, that changed, and now Canadian professionals' credentials are granted and monitored by the US-based Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI).

**Why this change?** To ensure that we are meeting world standards. GBCI provides independent oversight of professional credentialing in more than 90 countries through international testing channels. Even more importantly, GBCI has introduced a number of significant improvements to the credentialing program.

There are now three levels or tiers of excellence, each with specific eligibility and ongoing maintenance requirements. Tiered credentials allow you to distinguish between practitioners with basic, advanced, and higher levels of knowledge. And, as sustainable technologies advance and the LEED® Rating Systems evolve, the maintenance mechanism will ensure that the professionals you hire have the most current knowledge and understanding of green building practices.

**How does this work?** The most basic tier is the Green Associate (LEED® GA), which designates ‘professionals who support green building design, construction, and operations, and have basic knowledge of green building principles and practices and LEED®’. To obtain this designation, candidates must pass a two hour multiple choice test that covers the fundamentals. This is an entry level qualification.

The Accredited Professional (LEED® AP) tier involves a four hour, two part exam designed to assess the professionals’ understanding and knowledge of the LEED® Rating System and their ability to facilitate the certification process. Pre-existing LEED® APs have been ‘grandfathered’ to retain the designation. But, they are not required to fulfil maintenance requirements; so that their knowledge may well be outdated by the time you contract them to design your new or renovated premises.

**What should you be looking for?** The key letters are those that follow LEED® AP, indicating a specialty qualification with extensive continuing education requirements. All current LEED® APs have been offered the opportunity to enrol for a specialty designation and sign the disciplinary policy within a specific timeframe. That window started to close on August 1st. If those professionals don’t enrol within the deadline, they will have to rewrite the 4 hour exam in order to obtain those extra letters. If they do enrol, they must commit to an ongoing program of study and meet a biennial qualification requirement.

Further, the USGBC is proposing to change the LEED® rating system in future, so that projects will not get credit for having a LEED® AP on the team, if that person does not have a specialty designation.

For interior designers, the ID+C (Interior Design and Construction) specialty designation identifies professionals with an in-depth knowledge of green building principles and practices and, current, relevant, expertise in interiors projects. So, yes, you should be paying attention.

**What about IN8?** As ever, IN8 is committed to the highest standards of practice. Both principals, Michel and Don, have become LEED® AP ID+C.