

CONSERVATION AT WORK

Faced with looking for a new, GREENER SPACE for their headquarters or renewing its existing lease in a non-sustainable building, the WORLD WILDLIFE FUND CANADA turned to Colliers International for help. Together, they are turning the organization's old offices into a new model of sustainable redesign.

BY CHERYL REID-SIMONS

The buzz words are unavoidable: sustainable practices, carbon neutral, ecological footprint. You don't have to be a climate change scientist to know there's a movement afoot.

But while the newest, greenest developments have garnered their share of media attention, cities are still filled with an inventory of buildings constructed before "green" was anything but a color.

Taking heed of the second of today's three Rs—reduce, reuse, recycle—World Wildlife Fund Canada (WWF-Canada) is turning its

Toronto main office—located in one of those existing buildings—into a model of practical ecology. Along the way, the organization is proving that you don't have to turn your bottom line red to be green.

"Our redesign should be a good example for all businesses—for-profit organizations as well as not-for-profits," says Grahame Cliff, WWF-Canada's chief financial officer. "As the awareness grows among the public of the need to consume less, the kind of model we're trying to create will be much more recognized as the one to follow."

The WWF-Canada managed to fill its growing space needs while simultaneously cutting its own drain on natural resources. But they didn't move to some newly constructed LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building. In fact, they aren't moving at all. Instead, they negotiated a new five-year lease with their current landlord, Crestview Investment Corporation.

Unlike traditional leases, the new WWF-Canada lease includes extensive green provisions, including specific improvements to the lighting systems to reduce energy consumption and separate metering of WWF-Canada's offices so the efficiencies can be measured and the savings passed along to the organization. Crestview also will make other good faith efforts such as replacing equipment with energy efficient products (when it makes both operational and economic

sense) and establishing a building-wide "Green Committee," enabling other tenants to learn and participate in sustainability practices.

The journey to creating an environmentally friendly workplace began more than 12 months ago. As WWF-Canada neared the end of the lease term on its headquarters last fall, the organization's management knew they needed a change and began looking for a broker to help achieve their objectives.

"They said the goal is to create first, an economical deal, and second, a deal that could serve as a model for others," recalls Michael King of Colliers International's Toronto office. "They had to reduce their ecological footprint in any real estate decision they made, either renewing the current lease or by moving to a new building with a green-friendly partner."

After presentations from several brokers, WWF-Canada settled on Colliers.

"We selected Colliers for two principal reasons," Cliff says. "First, we had worked with them before on our Vancouver office lease and we really liked the people. And secondly, they were the ones who demonstrated to us the sharpest focus on the environmental issues."

Both King and Cliff say they learned a great deal from each other during the process. "I did say to Mike (King) at the time, 'You know this won't be easy—we're much more particular and have more criteria to meet than most clients,'" Cliff recalls. "But they were on the same wavelength. Colliers was very open to it and very

WWF-Canada is one of the country's leading conservation organizations and part of the largest independent conservation organization in the world. Here are some of their causes. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Virginia Falls, South Nahanni River, Northwest Territories, Canada. A Western Hudson Bay population female polar bear with her two three-month old cubs, just recently out of their den, in Wapusk National Park, near Hudson's Bay, Manitoba, Canada. Storm over Lake Ontario. The proposed East Arm National Park. Seagull flying over Lake Ontario. A herd of barren-ground caribou move through a snowy winter landscape on a windy day in Wapusk National Park, Manitoba, Canada. Lenore Nadeau (WWF) holds a threatened Blanding's Turtle hatchling prior to releasing it in Rondeau Provincial Park, Lake Erie, Ontario, Canada.

The World Wildlife Fund Canada worked with Crestview Investment Corporation to redesign their offices in the 245 Eglinton building in Toronto



willing to learn. In addition, they had an individual, Nancy Searchfield (National Leader of Sustainability Services/Canada for Colliers International), who is on the Board of Directors of the Canada Green Building Council. We thought then—and we now know—that they were willing to go through the journey with us.”

In the beginning, it seemed unlikely that WWF-Canada would be able to achieve their goals in the current building. “They were on the verge of moving,” says King. “I think we were all a little surprised that they ended up staying.”

It helped immensely that the landlord agreed with WWF-Canada’s philosophy and was eager to improve its own environmental stewardship. “Crestview is a great landlord,” King says. A relatively small company that operates in central Ontario, Crestview was interested in reducing their ecological footprint even before WWF-Canada made environmental concerns a requirement in its lease negotiations.

They couldn’t find a better partner to help make the changes than the WWF-Canada.

WWF-Canada is one of the country’s leading conservation organizations and part of the largest independent conservation organization in the world. The organization collaborates with businesses, government and communities to promote long-term solutions to the challenge of balancing growing human need with environmental sustainability.

But WWF-Canada’s size and strong reputation in the environmental community doesn’t mean they don’t have to balance their loftier

ecological concerns with grounded financial considerations.

“A key principal that we have to work on as a charity is striking a balance between achieving a lower (ecological) footprint with a prudent use of donor money,” Cliff says. “It isn’t a question of going out and procuring the best stuff. All of our stakeholders have to be able to look at us and say, ‘That’s being well done.’”

King says many companies can learn from WWF-Canada’s example of staying put. “So many mid-sized tenants believe that they have to move if they want to be more green,” King says. “That often means significant cost.”

Staying in their current building wasn’t just cost-effective, it was also a good choice for the environment because it’s reusing existing space. That means drywall won’t be sent to a landfill to reconfigure the space for a new tenant and energy won’t be used transporting operations to a new building.

“It’s the whole life cycle issue that’s sometimes lost sight of,” Cliff says. “When do you throw something out and replace it with something that’s more energy efficient?”

By putting the focus on existing buildings, King says WWF-Canada can have a tremendous impact. “We’re only building 3 million square feet of green office towers (in Toronto) in the next year or two,” King says. “What happens to the existing inventory? Those are the people we want to get to.”

And WWF is leading the way by example. Searchfield of Colliers notes, “There are many challenges in addressing existing buildings,

and we worked to implement market-leading solutions. It was phenomenal representing WWF-Canada because they identified very strong environmental objectives, which they maintained during the process with potential new landlords. WWF-Canada is helping to set new standards for green leasing in existing buildings. We are now sharing what we learned with the marketplace at large to help accelerate the transformation.”

The first thing WWF-Canada needed to address was space. “We had reached a point where we felt we were at capacity,” says Jennifer Jobbins, manager of Administration and Facilities with WWF-Canada. To make room for anticipated growth, WWF-Canada initially thought they would need to move to slightly bigger space. Now the plan involves thinking creatively about how to get better use of the square footage they now occupy to provide room for growth without using more space and the resources that go along with that.

New design—complete with shorter cubicle walls to reduce lighting needs—is expected to increase capacity by 13 percent over the current setup, Jobbins says. While most were secondhand to begin with, any old cubicles that are still usable may be donated to other charities. Those deemed not usable will be dismantled and as much of the materials as possible recycled.

In addition, like many companies, WWF-Canada encourages employees to use telecommuting, shared workspace and “hoteling,” where employees who normally work

outside the office reserve workspace only when they need it.

"We have quite a few of our staff who travel," Cliff says. "Their space may not be fully utilized all the time. Rather than give those employees dedicated work stations that sit empty for days at a time, they will now share workspace."

Aside from space concerns, WWF-Canada's first priority was increasing the energy efficiency at their main office.

"Many buildings were built at a time when, perhaps, it was more important to keep construction costs low than to worry about the cost of energy," Cliff says. "But with current conditions and the price of energy, nobody can just ignore operating costs."

While retrofitting older buildings can be costly, for many of the sustainable alterations, the payback is worth it. "I can't imagine why any organization wouldn't want to spend a bit more money upfront in order to save a lot more money in the long run," Cliff says.

The first—and probably biggest—change under the new lease will be the light fixtures. In addition to reconfiguring WWF-Canada offices and workspaces to make better use of natural lighting, Crestview is changing from T12 fluorescent lighting to more efficient T8 or T5 lamps and ballasts, not just in the organization's offices, but throughout the common areas of the 150,000-square-foot building and in the offices of other consenting tenants.

"It's not just light bulbs here, we're talking about the whole lighting system," Cliff says,

emphasizing Crestview's commitment.

Still, how much can more efficient lighting or simply turning off lights when they aren't needed really impact energy consumption? Consider the impact of the WWF-Canada-sponsored "Earth Hour." Earlier this year, across the globe on March 29, people were encouraged to turn off their lights for one hour.

During that voluntary black-out, Toronto Hydro reported an 8.7 percent drop in energy usage—the equivalent of taking 150,000 homes off the grid. Across Ontario, there was a 5 percent drop reported—a reduction similar to taking the cities of Guelph and Ottawa off the grid entirely.

Jobbins says the lighting changes being made in the building can achieve energy savings anywhere from 20 to 40 percent while improving the quality of the lighting. The new lights are quieter, and the color is more natural. They also reduce cooling costs because they generate less heat than traditional bulbs.

Another critical component in the lease was to give WWF-Canada responsibility for its own energy usage through separate metering and control. "We're all about measurement," Cliff says. "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."

By looking at energy consumption, WWF-Canada employees will have an added incentive to turn off lights when they aren't needed.

The measurement component will work for other tenants as well. "Our landlord had already implemented an improved waste-management program," Cliff says. "We're now working with him to make it an integrated part of our footprint measurements." The idea is that by giving tenants a tangible measurement of their recycling and waste reduction efforts, they will be encouraged to do more.

King sees the lease terms as a model of how much influence a mid-sized tenant can have by working with the landlord on making sound ecological choices. "These guys represent the 'every tenant,'" he says. "Because the lease provisions are largely being instituted building-wide, they magnified their effect by nearly 10 times. So many people can use this model. If it becomes an issue that's important to you, you can make some changes."

And green offices are becoming increasingly important, according to a poll commissioned by Colliers International last year. The survey, conducted by independent market research firm POLLARA, showed that 91 percent of tenants

prefer a green work environment. More impressively, the survey showed that 63 percent of tenants are willing to pay a premium to occupy green space—14 percent said they would pay as much as 10 percent more.

King expects to see ecological issues play a larger role in lease negotiations and says they can give tenants new leverage with their current landlords who might otherwise consider themselves "captives" to a contract.

But the greatest impact, King says, will be that the kind of simple, but effective, changes WWF-Canada has made will put a greener office space within reach of tenants who may not be able to pay the "green premium" for the newest innovations.

"You can have companies that go from zero to 100 percent more efficient, but not many people can model it," King reasons. "But go from zero to 50 percent more efficient and a number of people can model it. Which do you think will have a greater impact on the environment?"

In addition, King says the education he received in green practices is already helping his other clients—and himself—reduce consumption.

"It's been very eye-opening," he says. "It's not hard to achieve a bulk of the savings from an ecological perspective quickly. I'm highly conscious now of turning off lights, computers and other items. Those little things add up."

King also feels he has new contacts and resources to use when trying to help clients achieve ecological objectives. "I now can give my clients a better sense of direction," he says. "And if I don't know the answer, through this work, I've developed a good network."

Cliff says he learned things from King that will help WWF-Canada in the future. "We learned a lot about how the marketplace works in this area and what we needed to do to achieve our green goals while remaining a valuable and cooperative tenant," Cliff says.

The new lease is just the starting point for WWF-Canada, Cliff says. "Over time, more things will be done between our landlord and us," he says. "There are some things that can be done now and some things that can be tackled when it's more economically sensible," he says. "It's not like starting at a green field and putting up a new building and getting everything you want. This is a question of a journey to get to a better state. We're very happy that our landlord has agreed to take this journey with us." **KLI**



Grahame Cliff is WWF-Canada's chief financial officer

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