

Improving the Administration of Justice



By Clare Tattersall

More than 15 years in the making and two years under construction, Ontario's newest and most modern court will soon begin to mete out justice. Totalling 350,000 square feet, the Durham Consolidated Courthouse brings two court systems, the Superior Court and Ontario Court, as well as justice services currently provided in eight locations across the Durham region under one roof — making it the largest judicial complex in the province.

Located in downtown Oshawa, the \$334-million integrated facility touts a number of other firsts. Comprised of 33 courtrooms, three motion rooms, two conference/settlement rooms and related legal and court services, the state-of-the-art structure will be the most technologically advanced courthouse in the province. It will also be the first Ontario government building to receive LEED-NC (New Construction) silver certification and a LEED-EB (Existing Buildings) gold rating.

"It will set a precedent within the province and nationally," says Peter Wilson, vice-president of project delivery for Infrastructure Ontario, a crown corporation responsible for the transaction management of the project under the province's alternative financing and procurement program.

"Compared to other courthouses built in the last 10 years, it's going to achieve significant improvements in energy performance."

In fact, when the building opens in early 2010, Access Justice Durham — a consortium of companies including WZMH Architects, PCL Constructors Canada Inc., Babcock & Brown Infrastructure Group and Johnson Controls LP chosen to design, build, finance and maintain the courthouse, respectively — has agreed to reduce energy consumption by 42 per cent (compared with similar, existing leased facilities). If energy use exceeds this target, Access Justice Durham must pick up the tab



Photos courtesy WZMH Architects



over the length of the 30-year contractual service period.

“The energy performance targets are quite aggressive,” notes Wilson, adding the courthouse will also be certified (and recertified every three years) under the BOMA BEST program, a tool used to measure the environmental performance of existing commercial buildings.

Harmonizing the best practices of BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association) Canada’s Go Green program and the online assessment of Go Green Plus, BOMA BEST (Building Environmental Standards) was launched in October 2008 as an updated and simplified certification program. It includes four possible levels of certification, each of which provides ways to make buildings more environmentally friendly and cut operating costs. To be certified, existing structures must fully

comply with BOMA’s Best Practices. Areas addressed include energy and water management, emissions and effluents, waste reduction, the indoor environment and environmental management systems.

“This (program) offers us the ability to benchmark this building against other BOMA certified buildings within the province,” says Wilson.

With an emphasis on energy management and conservation, notable “green” features incorporated into the building’s design include high-efficiency boilers and chillers, a partial sodded roof with drought tolerant plants to reduce storm water runoff, cistern for rainwater collection to irrigate local landscaping, computerized lighting control system capable of turning on and off lights, ultra low-flow plumbing fixtures, dual flush toilets and waterless urinals.

The design-build contractor, PCL, has also agreed to divert 75 per cent of construction waste from landfills to be salvaged, recycled and reused.

“The way things are going we’re probably going to exceed that,” notes construction manager Don Gilliland.

Beginning in June 2007, construction of the six-storey (plus mechanical penthouse) courthouse with below-grade parking has moved along at a rapid pace. Today, roughly six months out from entire completion, the long-awaited project is 80 per cent complete.

“Everyone is working hard to make sure this is a successful project,” says Gilliland about the 400 workers currently on-site.

But while morale is high, the project hasn’t been without its challenges.

Prior to the official groundbreaking, the project team had to submit a design proposal that met the functional requirements needed to