

Green business congress hopes eco-toilets will bowl over delegates

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When international delegates come to see the Toronto region's greenest building technologies this week, they will be sent to the restrooms.

No ordinary washrooms, but odourless, chemical-free, composting toilets. The facilities, built for a new Toronto and Region Conservation Authority building, look like the regular ceramic bathroom variety, but without water or a refillable bowl.

They are thought to be the first used in an office setting in Canada and will be showcased to representatives from 30 countries as part of the World Green Business Council Congress. The event, which began yesterday and runs to Wednesday, will focus on green initiatives such as the toilets at the TRCA's restoration services building in Vaughan.

It will also explore areas where more needs to be done, says Andrew Bowerbank, manager of sustainable development for the TRCA and acting executive director of the World Green Building Council.

"In the past year, we've seen a massive movement in Toronto towards more green development," Mr. Bowerbank said in a phone interview Friday. "We see the private sector, municipal leaders, consultants and utility companies really all trying to work together on this."

Avi Friedman, author of *Sustainable Residential Development* and developer of Grow Home, an award-winning green-building design used in Canada, the United States and in Europe, says that in a city where smog and sprawl are persistent problems, there is a trend to shape up environmentally.

"There is a real push towards more energy efficiency," Mr. Friedman said. "There has really been recognition that the hour has come."

The Vaughan building is an example.

Rainwater collected from the roof is used to top up ponds nearby for ducks and geese. It employs mostly recycled or sustainable materials such as terracotta bricks. Most of the light is natural in the offices, which have floor-to-ceiling windows. And the building's brain in the basement moderates the temperature, air-flow, lighting and sanitation system.

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