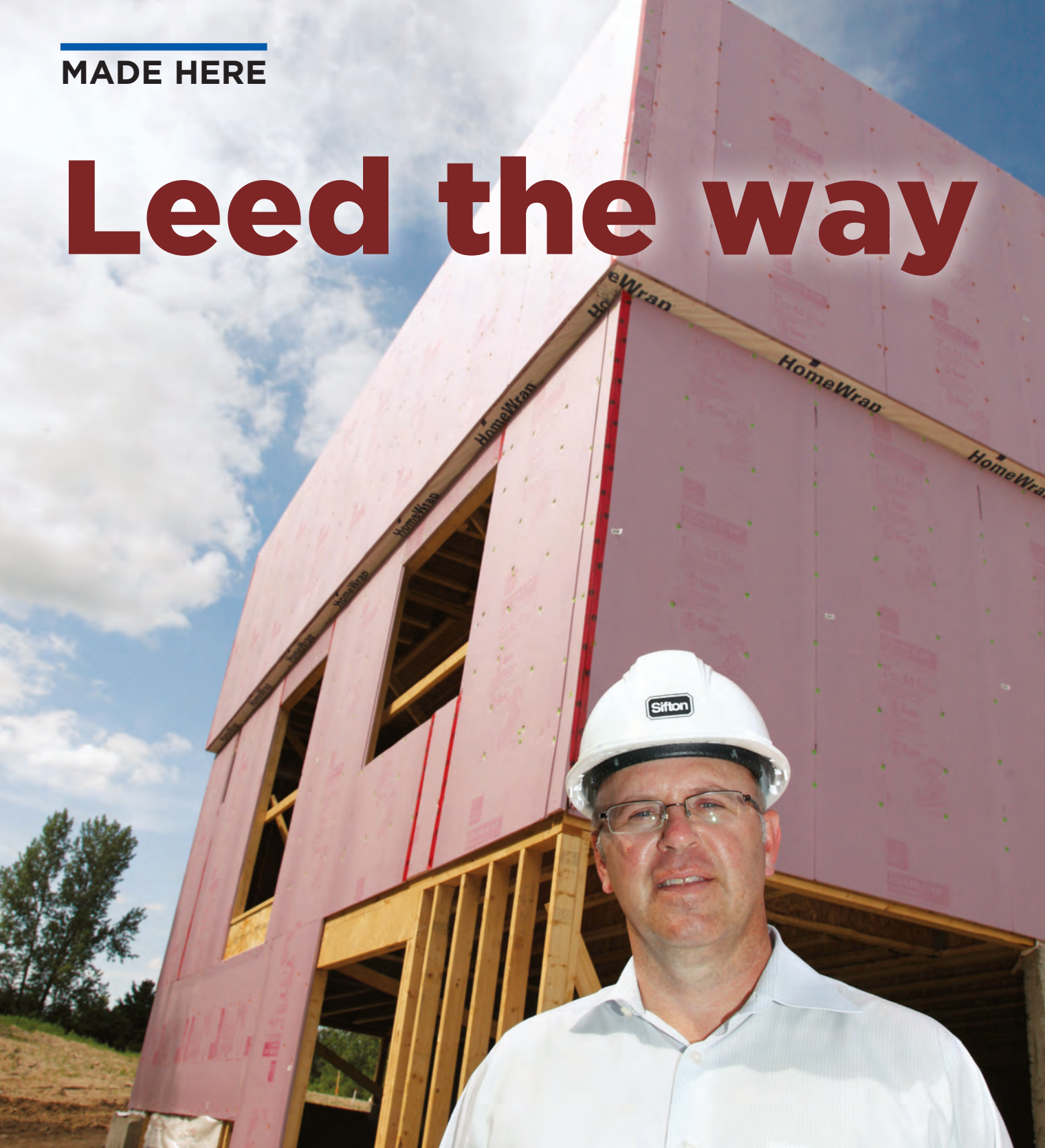


**MADE HERE**

# Lead the way



## **Sifton Properties builds the city's first LEED certified production homes**

By Jackie Westelaken

WHEN IT COMES TO REAL ESTATE, everyone knows it's location, location, location. But what if that adage changes to lean, green and LEED? New homebuyers, who are increasingly environmentally conscious, have some interesting green home designs available to them, and Sifton Properties Limited is expanding those options with the introduction of a new standard of production homes.

## Sifton Properties Limited

Sifton Properties Limited is a diversified construction, land development and retirement residence management company founded by Harry Sifton in 1923. The first Sifton house, built at 587 Rosedale Avenue, still stands today. More than 80 years, three generations of leadership and thousands of homes later, it is still a family-owned company with over 1,000 employees, and is a partner to hundreds of suppliers and trades. Sifton Properties has been recognized for its leadership, innovation and energy efficiency over the years and was named as one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies in 2009. This year Sifton is advancing its green building practices by introducing the first production-built LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) homes to London. Located in the Forest Hill subdivision, LEED homes must pass an independent certification for energy and water efficiency and environmentally friendly materials and design.

**MADE IN LONDON**

A Sifton model home is currently under construction in what is known as the Forest Hill subdivision, located just north of Sunningdale Road and east of Adelaide Street. This model home will mark the start of the city's first set of production homes that are both Energy Star and LEED certified.

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Sifton's director of housing operations Toby Stolee (above right and preceding page) is pictured with Isolino Sousa in the firm's first LEED-certified production home, currently under construction in the Forest Hill subdivision

“ A lot of what we do here in London is leading the way in the whole green building movement ”

—Toby Stolee

By definition, Energy Star homes focus on energy efficiencies including qualified heating equipment, a drain water heat recovery system, low-E argon vinyl windows and foam-insulated doors. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification is an internationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. The LEED certification employs credits to promote a whole-building approach to sustainability, recognizing performance in five key areas—sustainable site development, water efficiency, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

Both Energy Star and LEED certifications are awarded through third-party testing.

Toby Stolee, director of housing operations at Sifton, says improving efficiencies is a company priority and an operational mandate that dovetails well with green building practices. “We went through an exercise about a year and a half ago and we got into something called lean building,” he explains. “It’s similar to lean manufacturing, but it’s when a builder looks at how to reduce waste and therefore reduce costs. Lean building goes hand-in-hand with LEED, as that program is about reducing waste and being more efficient in the way homes are built.”

One of the challenges Sifton faces in this new venture is what the consumer is willing to pay. The added cost to a new home that is LEED certified is approximately 1% to 2%. Stolee says the company had to decide which features they’d incorporate, and then come up with the design options for potential homebuyers.

Sifton has already developed five standard models for LEED-certified homes.

There are different levels of certification in the LEED program, and at this time the Sifton homes will be built as LEED certified. There may be room down the road to build silver-, gold- or platinum-level homes, depending on the level of interest shown by London homebuyers.

LEED certification, however, isn't just about the way the home is built. Location and what's going on in the area are also taken into consideration, and the neighbourhood of Forest Hill fits LEED requirements. "Forest Hill already has an established network, including bike and walking trails, new schools and building lots that back on to a protected forested area," says Stolee. "All of these features made us try this particular part of the city for our green homes."

Stolee notes that transit access is also important in LEED certification. "One of the things that is always a challenge with new sites is transit, and if there is good access to public transit it lessens the need for a car or more than one car.

"London is definitely making progress and moving forward," continues Stolee. "A lot of what we do here in London is leading the way in the whole green building movement. It really took a jump forward when energy costs increased significantly, and there is still a lot of interest."

The first phase of construction includes nine homes in the Forest Hill development. They will all be on 40-foot lots that are approximately 115 feet deep and oriented the same way with side roof exposure. This means that if the homeowners want to eventually include solar technologies, their homes have been built to accommodate that.

Benefits of a LEED home include lower energy and water bills, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved indoor air quality. Sifton's Energy Star and LEED model home will be ready in September of this year, and it is the first of nine lots in the pilot project. The next phase calls for 40 lots where the LEED plans can also fit. Says an optimistic Stolee, "Although it's a pilot project so far, it's a company-wide priority." **Q**



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