

# Holiday Inn's Hotel M LEEDs the way

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE OCTOBER 6, 2011



The Holiday Inn Express & Suites Saint-Hyacinthe is the first eco-conscious hotel in Canada to earn the certification of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

**Photograph by:** Holiday Inn Express & Suites Saint-Hyacinthe, Holiday Inn Express & Suites Saint-Hyacinthe

Green initiatives are becoming mainstream in all aspects of life and business, including the hotel industry. Some of us start on an eco-conscious path by switching to better light bulbs, bundling our newspapers and buying biodegradable cleaning products. Others forge ahead with composting and environmentally friendly heating systems.

The new 94-room Hôtel M, Holiday Inn Express and Suites Saint Hyacinthe has done it all, and much more, and has been recognized for its groundbreaking efforts. It is the first hotel in Canada to earn the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the stringent U.S. Green Building Council and its affiliate in Canada.

This landmark establishment, a 45-minute drive east of Montreal, is more of a modern business hotel than a resort, popular as a stopover for travellers who are in St. Hyacinthe for agri-business or government meetings. Still, the Holiday Inn also is a great jumping-off point for recreational activities in the

area. Although it is short on country charm, it has handsome, minimalist decor, a swimming pool and exceptional in-room facilities.

"The goal of our environmentally sensitive program is to embrace 'the three Rs:' reduction of waste, reuse of materials and recycling of materials," said Nellie Robin, president of the Holiday Inn in St. Hyacinthe.

The Holiday Inn also is Quebec's first hotel of 50 rooms or more to be awarded the "5 Green Keys" by the Hotel Association of Canada. A few other hotels in Quebec have plans to build according to LEED standards or partially have adapted their operating systems, but are not yet certified. Not only is the Holiday Inn in St. Hyacinthe the first to earn the designation in Canada, it is the first of its well-known brand in North America. It's a major accomplishment in the eco-world, because there are only about 70 hotels in the U.S. with a LEED label, which requires that complex criteria be met, including efficient water and energy systems, eco-friendly materials and good-quality indoor environments.

The Holiday Inn's features that were designed to reduce its carbon footprint are both structural and operational. For example, the hotel used gravel that was made from cement from a demolished bridge. The hotel also has a white roof to reflect the sun and minimize air-conditioning. "Grey" water that has

The hotel also has a white roof to reflect the sun and minimize air-conditioning. "Grey" water that has been used in showers or washing is recycled through metal coils to recapture its heat and transfer it to clean water. The hotel has developed "smart" rooms that adjust heating and cooling depending on whether the room is vacant or occupied. And the indoor swimming pool has a saltwater filtration system, which avoids chemicals such as chlorine.

Most of those features are invisible to guests, who will see an attractive, contemporary hotel with modern lines and sleek decor in the subdued colours of chocolate and vanilla. The minimalist dark-wood furniture is almost all made within 20 kilometres of the hotel, saving on shipping costs and supporting the community. In bed, you'll only feel the cushy comfort, but the custom-built mattresses are all natural, with bamboo casings and soy bases instead of foam.

The Holiday Inn brand always has stood for predictability and convenience. Each room at the St. Hyacinthe hotel is equipped with basics like an LCD television, a mini-refrigerator, a hair dryer, a coffee machine, wireless Internet and two telephones. The family-friendly Kid Suites have bunk beds in a portioned-off section of the room. They add a second television and a video-game console, which will be welcome entertainment, along with the swimming pool, in case of poor weather.

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**If You Go:**

St. Hyacinthe is a 45-minute drive from Montreal. Take Highway 20 east toward Quebec City and Exit 133.

Hôtel M, Holiday Inn Express and Suites Saint-Hyacinthe: 450-251-1111, hotelm.ca; 1500 Johnson St. E., St. Hyacinthe.

Price: Until Oct. 31, rates on Fri. and Sat. start at \$90, for two, including buffet breakfast, use of saltwater indoor pool, gym, guest computers, wireless Internet, free calls throughout U.S. and Canada, and parking with charging stations for electric vehicles. Regular rates for rooms and suites are approximately \$125-160 per night.