

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

### **Canadian Engineers Win WoodWORKS! Advocate Award for Haitian School Reconstruction Project**

*November 4, 2011...Ottawa, Ontario:* Four Canadian engineering firms – Blackwell Bowick, Halsall Associates, Read Jones Christoffersen and Quinn Dressell Associates – received a WoodWORKS! Engineer Wood Advocate Award at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Wood Gala last night in Ottawa for their collective effort in using wood Saint Joseph School in Embouchure, Haiti. The firms banded together in a pro bono effort to rebuild schools in Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake.

*The WoodWorks! Awards* program recognizes excellence in the building industry. The awards are given annually by the Canadian Wood Council who acknowledge projects that push the limits of wood design in structures and demonstrate excellence in the use of wood.

Saint Joseph School, which opened in September 2011, is one of 12 Haitian schools the Canadian engineers are working to rebuild by the end of 2012. Since the project started just one year ago, two schools have opened, two are under construction and three more are out for tender.

Dan Carson, an engineer with Halsall Associates, said it is very gratifying to see the group's collective efforts recognized by this award. "From the beginning, this project has been about collaboration, education and sustainability. Although our firms are normally competitors, we recognized early on that we'd have a much bigger impact if we joined forces," said Carson on behalf of the four firms.

The collaboration extends beyond the firms themselves, however. The project is being undertaken in partnership with Finn Church Aid (FCA), a Finnish NGO, as well as local Haitian architects, contractors and trades people.

An important component is the "Knowledge and Training Program", intended to grow the capacity of local engineers and share new construction techniques with the trades. "By sharing knowledge and teaching Haitian engineers examples of best practices, our collective goal is that future building projects in Haiti will be better designed and constructed to withstand earthquakes and hurricanes," said Carson.

Carson also said that being honoured with the *WoodWORKS! Engineering Award* demonstrates that innovative buildings of quality and excellence can be achieved even in underdeveloped countries following a natural disaster.

"Instead of building temporary or transitional shelters, we are building permanent schools. They're simple but robust structures, and they use durable materials that are locally-sourced whenever possible. We think this project shows that a small-scale volunteer effort can make a significant difference in the lives of Haitian children – today and for generations to come."

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Or see the websites of the engineering partnership companies and the FCA:

[www.blackwellbowick.com](http://www.blackwellbowick.com)

<http://www.halsall.com>

[www.rjc.ca](http://www.rjc.ca)

[www.quinndressel.com](http://www.quinndressel.com)

[http://www.kua.fi/en/about\\_us](http://www.kua.fi/en/about_us)