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DECEMBER 11, 2018

Construction sector welcomes B.C. climate plan as good for business

Building companies and organizations: Roadmap to zero carbon by 2050 needed for certainty

VANCOUVER / MUSQUEAM, SQUAMISH & TSLEIL-WAUTUTH TERRITORIES — Fourteen leading companies and organizations working in B.C.'s building sector say the province's new climate and clean growth plan lays down a solid foundation for the decarbonization of our homes and buildings.

The [CleanBC](#) strategy, released last week, outlines an ambitious suite of measures projected to cut carbon pollution from the built environment by 40 per cent by 2030. Notably, through the [BC Energy Step Code](#), the Province is the first in Canada to define a clear path for all *new* buildings to be net-zero energy ready (ultra energy efficient) by 2032.

The Province is investing in training for our trades workers and professionals, and in new incentives to upgrade our homes and businesses to make them less polluting. The plan also creates an energy rating requirement to ensure that everyone investing in real estate, whether buying a home or leasing an office, has information on building energy performance whilst weighing their options. Transparency will be a key driver of innovation for the sector.

The climate plan, however, leaves some critical questions unanswered, particularly with respect to preparing our *existing* homes and buildings for the clean future. It's estimated 70 per cent of buildings standing today will still be in use as of 2050. By 2050, we need to eliminate carbon pollution coming from buildings. Between now and then, we will have only one or two can't-miss opportunities to retrofit each of these buildings. (How do we ensure these upgrades result in a low to zero carbon building? And how do we ensure new buildings are not only more efficient, but also heated by low carbon sources?)

Today, [we're calling for more clarity](#) in Phase 2 of the climate plan, expected next year, on the roadmap for buildings beyond 2030 and all the way to 2050 — particularly concerning electrification, fuel choices, and the role of utilities in this transformation. To establish a

steady retrofit economy, we also need new financing tools and a sustainable source of public funding, such as green bonds, to avoid the boom and bust of incentive programs. We look forward to working with the Province on this next iteration of the plan.

By pursuing these opportunities, we can reduce our carbon pollution while saving money, creating local jobs, and opening export markets for B.C.-made components and designs. We can also ensure all British Columbians live and work in buildings that promote better health, well-being, and productivity.

Quotes

“BCIT’s School of Construction and the Environment supports the needs of industry in advancing the state of practice in sustainable construction through education and trades training. We look forward to working with the Province to advance the CleanBC vision of a zero carbon building sector.”

— *Wayne Hand, dean of the School of Construction and the Environment, British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)*

“DIALOG is committed to improving the well-being of our communities and the environment we share. As such, it is our goal to work with all stakeholders to reduce the carbon footprint of the built environment, both new and existing.”

— *Rod Yeoh, principal, DIALOG*

“Provincial programs that pave the way to net-zero energy ready buildings — including important sources of incentives and funding — are key to making the transition to low-carbon communities. We are excited to be a part of the movement towards a clean energy future in British Columbia.”

— *Lisa Westerhoff, associate, Integral Group*

“With this plan, British Columbia is reclaiming its leadership position in clean energy and climate responsibility. We believe that this will prompt further innovation in the tech and clean energy sectors in this province.”

— *Donovan Woollard, CEO, OPEN*

“British Columbia’s leadership in building standards not only improves affordability for homeowners, but offers economic opportunity and better, healthier, and more resilient buildings for everyone. We look forward to working with our industry and government partners to ensure the required skills and technologies are available throughout the province.”

— *Rob Bernhardt, CEO, Passive House Canada*

“In the next 30 years, British Columbians need to work together to eliminate carbon pollution from all of our homes and buildings. This is your friendly neighbourhood megaproject — one that will create jobs in every community and leave a legacy of safer, healthier, and low carbon homes.”

— *Tom-Pierre Frappé-Sénéclauze, director of buildings and urban solutions, Pembina Institute*

“CleanBC shows important leadership by the Province to commit to meaningful carbon reduction measures that will provoke a true shift in the design and construction industry, resulting in more sustainable buildings that will benefit us all.”

— *Susan Gushe, managing director, Perkins+Will*

“We are pleased to see the Province listing quantifiable actions towards 2030 emission reductions. In our 30 years of industry experience, we have seen proven results from energy efficiency retrofits that have achieved near net zero carbon. Further support for existing commercial and institutional buildings through EfficiencyBC could help address the gap towards the CleanBC plan targets.”

— *Robert Greenwald, president, Prism Engineering*

“At RDH, we have a passion for making buildings better, and we know that significant greenhouse gas emission reductions can be realized through the building sector. We therefore fully support the principles of energy efficiency and sustainability introduced in British Columbia’s new climate strategy, and we look forward to working with the industry and the provincial government to achieve this vision.”

— *Brittany Coughlin, principal and energy and sustainability specialist, RDH Building Science*

“The measures outlined in the CleanBC strategy demonstrate a clear path forward to addressing the serious issue of climate change. This is a big undertaking, but it is doable; we are working on building projects that already meet the 2032 energy performance goals today. It is encouraging to see leadership at the provincial level. Let’s get on with it with the urgency this issue deserves!

— *Jason Packer, principal and senior green building strategist, Recollective Consulting*

“This is a pivotal opportunity to reimagine the purpose and potential of our built environment — our buildings, infrastructures, systems, and cities — and how we define, procure, design, develop, measure, value, and adaptively evolve them over time. This task demands proactive, regenerative approaches — integrated across sectors and disciplines — to leverage synergies and create stacked values for the holistic benefit of people, place, and planet. The great news is we have enormous capacity in B.C. to do this — the task ahead is to further empower it!”

— *Jennifer Cutbill, regional director for B.C.-Yukon and founding chair of the Committee on Regenerative Environments, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC)*

“We are entering an ‘existing building revolution’ which will transform the way we use energy in all types of buildings. Technology retrofits with ultra efficient lighting, low carbon heating sources, and automated cloud connected controls with data analytics will transform everything. Decarbonizing will be a byproduct of the renewal of virtually every structure in our society with energy efficiency technology, fuelling job growth, savings, and entrepreneurial opportunity.”

— *Scott Sinclair, CEO, SES Consulting*

“Climate change is the biggest challenge facing the human race today, and we all have a role to play in addressing it. B.C.’s new climate plan sends a clear message that our province is taking a leadership role in tackling climate change. This in turn provides opportunities for sustainable industries to grow and flourish, for citizens to take action, and for all of us to maintain hope that humanity will rise to challenge. It’s not too late!”

— *Maeri Machado, director of the sustainability and energy team for B.C. and Yukon, WSP*

“With buildings contributing roughly 56 per cent of Vancouver’s overall carbon emissions, it is critical that the province and the local building industry work together to innovate towards meeting higher design, construction, and operating standards. Zero emission buildings are the future of Canadian infrastructure and the key to meeting B.C.’s climate targets. ZEBx commends the province for the launch of the CleanBC Strategy, and commits to supporting the province by continuing to develop programming that accelerates market implementation of zero emission buildings.”

— *Christian Cianfrone, executive director, Zero Emissions Building Exchange (ZEBx)*

Quick facts

- The Pembina Institute [estimates](#) B.C. must reduce carbon pollution from homes and buildings by 80–100% in order to meet the province’s legislated climate target for 2050.
- Accordingly, B.C. needs to retrofit 30,000 houses, 17,000 apartment units, and three million square feet of commercial space each year between now and 2050.
- This megaproject could create 10,000 sustainable jobs across the province and generate \$4–8 billion in economic growth.
- Buildings and communities are responsible for 22 per cent of B.C.’s carbon pollution.

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Join the conversation on Twitter: [#CleanBC](#)

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About us

BCIT is a publicly funded polytechnic offering technical education and vocational training offering credentials from the level of certificate to master's degree. The School of Construction and the Environment is concerned with the natural environment, the built environment, and the relationship between them.

DIALOG is a design practice with studios across San Francisco, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto. Their work includes designing for community wellbeing, sustainability and urban vibrancy, health and wellness, transportation, education, arts and culture, residential, retail and commercial, as well as mixed-use solutions.

Integral Group is a global network of mechanical, electrical, plumbing, energy engineers, and sustainability policy and planning experts collaborating under a single deep green engineering umbrella. Specializing in the design of simple, elegant, cost-effective systems for a wide variety of project types from mixed-use, commercial, and institutional to industrial buildings, Integral Group is widely regarded as a pioneer in building design, sustainability, and performance with a holistic and integrative approach.

OPEN develops data aggregation and analysis platforms for decision-makers in the building sector, for the purpose of promoting a transition to high performance, low energy consumption buildings.

Passive House Canada is a national non-profit association advocating to make the international Passive House standard of building performance understood, achievable, and adopted by government, industry, professionals, and homeowners across Canada through education, advocacy, events, and building projects. Learn more: www.passivehousecanada.com

The **Pembina Institute** is a non-profit think-tank that advocates for strong, effective policies to support Canada's clean energy transition. We have offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, and Ottawa. Learn more: www.pembina.org

Perkins+Will is an interdisciplinary, research-based architecture and design firm founded on the belief that design has the power to transform lives and enhance communities. Perkins+Will is consistently ranked among the world's top design firms, recognized as a leader in sustainability, and in 2018, Fast Company named the firm as one of the World's Most Innovative Companies.

Prism Engineering is a consulting firm focused on saving energy. We work collaboratively with our clients to improve facility performance through upgrading building systems, executing energy management programs, monitoring results for continuous improvement, and engaging people.

RDH Building Science is a consulting firm focused on the science, design, and construction of buildings. We help building owners, architects, and construction professionals across North America achieve their goals and bring their visions to life.

Recollective is a values-driven green building consulting firm. Based in Vancouver, we have experience working on over 500 high performance green buildings in B.C. and throughout North America.

The **Royal Architectural Institute of Canada** (RAIC) is the leading national voice for excellence in the built environment in Canada, demonstrating how design enhances the quality of life, while addressing important issues of society through responsible architecture and built realm design.

SES Consulting is a for-profit company that helps clients renew their buildings with state of the art energy efficiency technology. SES recently won the EGBC Sustainability Award for the energy retrofit of Vancity Terminal in Vancouver, which achieved an 80 per cent reduction in GHG emissions with a six-year simple payback. We have offices in Vancouver, Victoria, and Calgary. Learn more: www.sesconsulting.com

WSP is one of the world's leading engineering professional services consulting firms. At WSP, we believe that for societies to thrive, we must all hold ourselves accountable for tomorrow.

ZEBx is a collaborative platform focused on rapidly accelerating the knowledge, capacity, and passion for zero emission buildings in Vancouver and throughout British Columbia. ZEBx supports industry leaders and innovators by connecting them to solutions, and supports regulators by collecting industry data to assess impact, identify barriers, and recommend actions for building capacity.