

Minister of State for Building Code Renewal
Government of British Columbia

Minister of Energy
Government of British Columbia

Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
Government of British Columbia

Dear Minister of State for Building Code Renewal; Minister of Energy; and Minister Community Sport and Cultural Development;

British Columbia has made a bold commitment to fight climate change. The province has committed to reducing total provincial emissions to 6% below 2007 levels by 2012, 33% below 2007 levels by 2020, and 80% below 2007 levels by 2050. This commitment and the actions taken to date are important contributions to the global effort to reduce emissions, and we commend the provincial government's efforts to take action on climate change and to build a green economy in B.C.

Achieving B.C.'s reduction targets will require aggressive action in all sectors of our economy – including homes and buildings. Energy consumption from homes and buildings accounts for approximately 12% of B.C.'s total greenhouse gas emissions, and emissions from this sector will need to decline for the province to achieve its targets.

The Green Building Leaders¹ are a group of forward-looking local governments that have come together in partnership with the Pembina Institute to explore how to improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy in new and existing buildings in B.C. We have focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy regulations that are a step beyond what the provincial government or any local governments in B.C. are currently implementing. We see these types of approaches as one of the ways to meet B.C.'s greenhouse gas reduction targets while creating economic opportunities throughout the province.

Although local governments in B.C. are taking action to reduce emissions and are committed to increasing those efforts, our research so far indicates that local governments have limited ability to regulate new and existing buildings given the current jurisdiction.² Given this, we urge and support the provincial government to explore and, if feasible, implement opportunities in the following area:

- Setting higher energy efficiency standards for new homes and buildings, beyond the planned changes to the B.C. building code,
- Requiring existing homes and buildings to meet minimum energy performance standards
- Requiring that some portion of the energy needs for new homes and buildings be met by renewable energy that is produced on-site or in the community.

¹ Partner communities include: Campbell River, City of North Vancouver, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Regional District of Nanaimo, Tofino and Whistler.

See www.greenbuildingleaders.ca for more details.

² Deborah Curran, *Jurisdiction Options for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in Buildings* (Vancouver, BC: The Pembina Institute, 2010), <http://www.greenbuildingleaders.ca/docs/gbl-discussionpaper-withcover.pdf> (accessed Oct. 1, 2010).

As a means to support effective implementation of the regulations above, we also urge the provincial government to:

- Require all homes and buildings to have a rating that clearly communicates how efficiently it uses energy
- Implement financing tools that make energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions accessible to all British Columbians and B.C. businesses.

While these regulations have been used extensively in other jurisdictions, we recognize that further work will be required to customize them to the B.C. context. To show that we are committed to finding these solutions, the Green Building Leaders are now exploring how to make renewable energy requirements work in B.C. We are also building support for the use of local improvement charges to finance renewable energy and energy efficiency in our communities. We welcome the province's input and involvement in these initiatives.

We believe there is room to go beyond the existing province-wide regulations on new and existing buildings, and in general, we would prefer to see province-wide implementation of green building policy instead of a community-by-community approach. We also recognize that some communities will want to move more quickly than others, and as such, we support approaches that allow leading local governments to opt-in to higher standards if province-wide implementation is not immediately possible. This model of regulatory change is similar to how the water efficiency and solar-ready regulations were implemented.

Addressing climate change is a huge challenge, and all levels of government will have to work together to identify and implement solutions. B.C. is a leading jurisdiction in North America in taking bold action on climate change, and we support continued work to identify and implement solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing buildings. We will continue to work toward this goal, and we invite the provincial government to join us.

Sincerely,

Campbell River, City of North Vancouver, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Regional District of Nanaimo, Tofino and Whistler

Cc:

Minister of Environment, Government of British Columbia

Minister of Small Business, Technology, and Economic Development, Government of British Columbia

Minister of State for Climate Action, Government of British Columbia

Ms. Bev Van Ruyven, Deputy CEO & Executive Vice-President, BC Hydro

Mr. Doug Stout, Vice President, Energy Solutions and External Relations, Terasen

Mr. Gary MacIssac, Executive Director, Union of B.C. Municipalities

Mr. Matt Horne, Director of BC Energy Solutions, Pembina Institute