



2024 Federal Government Green Building Strategy – Overview

On July 16, 2024, the federal Minister of Energy and Natural Resources released the government's new Green Building Strategy (CGBS).

To help develop a sustainable foundation for years to come, the Government of Canada's new Buy Clean approach will build on Canada's clean manufacturing advantage. The approach supports a shift to low-carbon materials and design through federal construction procurements and public infrastructure asset investments, which reduces the full life cycle of emissions from building materials and projects, fosters manufacturing competitiveness and creates jobs.

Background

The buildings sector has an important role to play when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improving resiliency to climate hazards, such as floods, wildfires and hurricanes. The Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act enshrines in legislation the Government of Canada's commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Buildings account for 18% of Canada's emissions, when including electricity-related emissions, and is the third largest emitting sector after the oil and gas sector and the transportation sector. Almost all buildings' operating emissions (>96%) come from space and water heating from the use of equipment that runs on fossil fuels, such as natural gas furnaces and boilers, while further emissions are embodied in construction materials used in buildings, such as concrete, steel, aluminum and wood.

Beyond climate and affordability considerations, this renewal also presents an enormous economic opportunity. From the need to draw on skilled trades and supply low carbon construction materials, to the growth of clean technology businesses and innovative building designs, Canada is uniquely positioned to lead globally while becoming more prosperous locally.

The CGBS aims to decarbonize and improve the resiliency of Canada's buildings stock, while supporting affordability, job creation and economic growth. The CGBS centers around three priorities:

The CGBS aims to decarbonize and improve the resiliency of Canada's buildings stock, while supporting affordability, job creation and economic growth. The CGBS centers around three priorities:

- Accelerate retrofits
- Build green and affordable from the start
- Shape the buildings sector of the future

We are not starting from zero. The federal government has invested heavily in support of buildings sector decarbonization goals since 2016 which has provided a foundation of knowledge and awareness across the sector for more ambitious decarbonization.



Commercial / institutional buildings, as well as community buildings, where we work, study and play, with initiatives like the Deep Retrofit Accelerator Initiative to accelerate the development of deep retrofit projects, adoption of the highest energy performance standards, and private and public sector partnerships with the Canada Infrastructure Bank. As announced in Budget 2024, we are expanding our work with an investment of \$73.5M – with programs such as the ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager® platform – to support the implementation of local initiatives including benchmarking, labelling and disclosure policies, and better, more ambitious building performance standards to further reduce emissions and lower energy bills.

Federally owned buildings: As the country’s largest building asset owner and procurer of construction materials, the Government of Canada is helping decarbonize and improve the resiliency of Canada’s buildings sector through its Greening Government Strategy (GGS) and Greening Government Fund. Through the GGS, the Government of Canada’s is reducing environmental impacts associated with federal building operations and construction projects, while enhancing the climate resiliency of federal assets, services, and operations. Moreover, by implementing a ‘buy clean’ policy approach through the GGS, the Government of Canada is promoting the adoption of construction materials with low embodied carbon and that are renewable such as wood, reclaimed or recycled materials, and low-emission concrete and steel.

Crown Corporations are now expected to align with the Green Government Strategy or adopt an equivalent set of commitments in each significant area of their operations.

New construction needs to be high performance – adopting the highest viable tier of the National Energy Code for Buildings (for larger buildings) and of the National Building Code (for residential homes and small buildings) – and consider embodied carbon (in construction materials).

The private sector has an important role to play in providing capital, expertise, and leadership to transform Canada’s buildings.

Strategies like maximizing utilization, reusing, refurbishing, and repurposing already built space provide a cost-effective way to help decarbonize Canada’s buildings stock by extending the lifespan of existing buildings and avoiding the energy-intensive process of creating new materials. Deep retrofits – that involve upgrades to multiple building systems and equipment (such as replacing roofs; adding, upgrading, or rearranging windows; adding or increasing insulation; replacing or improving building envelope or cladding) – can achieve maximum energy savings and GHG emissions reductions.