

THE CITY OF VICTORIA



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 10, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of Victoria City Council, I am writing today to inform you that Council has voted to endorse the Help Cities Lead campaign and to request that your city consider doing the same. Emissions from buildings account for about 11% of the province's GHG emissions. This is the third highest source of GHG emissions in BC after road transportation (27.1%) and the oil and gas sector (17.6%). For municipalities, GHG emissions from existing buildings account for 40-60% of community emissions. In Victoria, this number is around 50% of our community GHG inventory.

In British Columbia, the regulation of buildings typically occurs at the provincial level. For the past two decades British Columbia has been at the forefront of action and policies taken in Canada to reduce energy use and GHG emissions from buildings. The 2018 CleanBC Plan moved the province further in this direction with key commitments for the building sector such as a net-zero energy building standard by 2032, a building upgrade standard by 2024, and exploring building energy labelling options.

A number of local governments, including Victoria, are keen to take even bolder action, and have set ambitious targets of our own to significantly reduce GHG emissions from buildings over the next 10 years in alignment with climate emergency declarations. The success of the Province in achieving deep emissions reductions from the building sector are directly connected to the success of local governments to achieve their own targets because most buildings are situated within these communities. However, tools currently available to local governments to pursue these ambitious reduction targets are largely limited to information campaigns and incentives. Although helpful, on their own these tools are insufficient to achieve broad and deep energy and GHG reductions given limited budgets.

Help Cities Lead (helpcitieslead.ca) is an education and awareness campaign working to build support for more focused collaboration between the Province of British Columbia and local governments on building climate policy.

The campaign project team identifies five regulatory measures where additional authority would be instrumental for municipalities in accelerating climate action:

1. Regulating GHG emissions for new buildings – the BC Energy Step Code only regulates energy efficiency in new buildings. Leading local governments would also like the ability to regulate GHG emissions from new buildings.
2. Mandatory home energy labelling - In Canada and British Columbia, legislation requires energy labelling for a broad range of consumer products including motor vehicles, furnaces, windows, lightbulbs, and kitchen appliances. However, there are no labeling requirements for the single largest purchase a given Canadian is likely to make—their home.

3. Property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing - programs allow property owners to finance the up-front cost of building energy efficiency upgrades—such as more efficient heating systems, or windows—by paying the costs back over time via a voluntary property tax assessment. The assessment is attached to the property, not an individual; if, and when, the property is sold, the financing carries on with the new owner.

4. Regulating GHG emissions for existing buildings – this would include the development of a new regulation that would set greenhouse gas emissions targets from existing buildings.

5. Mandatory building energy benchmarking and reporting - Energy benchmarking is the process of collecting and monitoring energy data from a large number of buildings over time so that governments and the private sector can compare the performance of any one participating building against similar properties.

Direction to implement the first three of these measures – enabling local governments to regulate GHG emissions for new buildings, home energy labelling, and PACE financing – were included in the ministerial mandate letters issued in November 2020. Help Cities Lead encourages the Province to move as quickly as possible and in close consultation with local governments to develop and implement these measures.

Help Cities Lead would also like the Province to enable local governments to choose, when ready, to opt into the remaining two measures not addressed by the mandate letters – namely, regulating GHG emissions for existing buildings and building energy benchmarking and reporting.

The suite of initiatives is intended to compliment what the provincial government and utilities are already doing in this area and help to lay the groundwork for eventual province-wide adoption of these measures.

These actions would let municipalities, ready to take bolder action on climate, lead the way in regulating emissions in buildings. This would provide a template for action for other jurisdictions and even for provincial regulation in the future.

As such, we are requesting that your city consider endorsing the Help Cities Lead campaign and that you communicate this support directly to the Province by writing to the below Ministers:

- Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca
- Minister of Municipal Affairs, MAH.Minister@gov.bc.ca
- Minister of Energy, Mines, and Low-Carbon Innovation, EMPR.Minister@gov.bc.ca
- Minister of Finance, FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca
- Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing, AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Lisa Helps
Victoria Mayor