

‘CLEANING’ UP CONSTRUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CLEANBC ROADMAP

The Province of British Columbia (the ‘**Province**’) has recently released its amended plan, the CleanBC Roadmap, on how it will achieve the Paris emissions reduction targets for 2030 and be net-zero by 2050. The Province launched the CleanBC Roadmap in 2018, though it was recently revised to provide further direction and specificity on how these goals will be achieved. These changes will be accompanied by legislation which industry must comply with.

The updates are largely due to two international reports calling for increased action on reducing emissions and addressing climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the ‘**IPCC**’) described the current situation as being a ‘code red for humanity’. It unequivocally stated that climate change is the result of human activities and to avoid the worst of the harms resulting from climate change, increased measures must be taken to reduce warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. (Civic Legal LLP has written a previous article on the IPCC Report which can be [found here](#)). Further, the International Energy Agency released a study on how to accomplish the 2050 net-zero target. The study acknowledged governments’ difficulties with achieving this goal and provided recommendations to substantially reduce emissions.

The Province found the current requirements were not stringent enough to reach the 2030 goals. Therefore, in response to these reports, the CleanBC Roadmap outlines how the Province plans to meet these goals while promoting a strong economy. It also emphasizes the increasing interest of investors in clean industries. The CleanBC Roadmap focuses specifically on the following eight areas to achieve the 2030, and eventually the 2050, goals:

- low carbon energy;
- transportation;
- buildings;
- communities;
- industry, including oil and gas;
- forest bioeconomy;
- agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries; and
- negative emissions technologies.

The Province’s goal is to transition to zero-carbon buildings by 2030. Therefore, the updated CleanBC Roadmap will impact the construction sector in several ways, including updates to BC Building Code, added requirements for new buildings, and mandatory building improvements.

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A new carbon pollution standard will be added to the BC Building Code to address the issue of GHG emissions directly. GHG emissions will be targeted through requirements regarding electrification, materials, low carbon fuels, and low carbon district energy. The Province will also focus on reducing embodied carbon, which is the total GHG emissions throughout a building's lifecycle. In doing so, the Province will consider the entirety of the building, including materials, transportation, construction, maintenance, and use.

The Province, in partnership with local governments, has begun development of voluntary carbon pollution standards. The voluntary standards will serve as models for future provincial requirements. These requirements will be phased in over time, in 2024, 2027, and 2030. By 2024, the BC Building Code will provide for new energy-efficiency standards for existing buildings as well as building upgrades. Moreover, in 2030, all new space and water heating equipment must be 100% efficient. Additionally, local governments may require, by bylaw, a higher step of the [BC Energy Step Code](#) beyond the current requirements of the BC Building Code or incentivize builders to voluntarily comply with a higher step.

BC Housing has also released the [Mobilizing Building Adaptation and Resilience Project](#) which assists professionals with planning, design, and construction of buildings that are resilient to the impacts of climate change such as flooding and higher temperatures.

The CleanBC Roadmap also introduces changes in transportation that are relevant to the construction industry. The Province launched the CleanBC Go Electric Commercial Vehicle Pilot Program in 2021.

This supports the transition to zero-emission commercial vehicles, which is an important component of reaching the 2030 and 2050 goals. The Province is committed to reducing emissions related to goods movement; therefore, it plans to reduce the energy intensity of goods movement by 10% in 2030 and 50% by 2050. The Province currently provides incentives for transitioning to zero-emission commercial vehicles. Further information on the incentives program can be found at the [CleanBC Go Electric Specialty Use Vehicle Incentive](#) program.

This year, as residents of B.C., we have already felt the severe impacts of climate change. The Province's CleanBC Roadmap provides a path forward to limit the effects of climate change in the years to come. The CleanBC Roadmap offers details of the expectations of industries and provides the economic case for implementing change to meet the 2030 targets. However, these changes require more of industry and provide for legal enforcement for non-compliance. As a result, professionals in the construction industry will need to stay up to date on the latest changes as the Province phases in legislative amendments.

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Kelsey Stuckert



KELSEY STUCKERT

604.358.0293

KELSEY@CIVICLEGAL.CA

Kelsey is an associate lawyer of the firm. She maintains a general municipal law practice with a focus on litigation and environmental law. She provides advice to municipalities and regional districts on regulatory liability, contract disputes and elections. During her time at law school, Kelsey was the Social Justice and Public Interest Representative for the Allard Law Student Society Careers Committee. She also volunteered with Pro Bono Students Canada as a researcher for the Canadian Mental Health Association and completed the Indigenous Community Legal Clinic.

Our lawyers combine legal experience in local government, commercial real estate development, and construction law to provide legal services to local governments, owners, builders and developers on a range of projects, from concept to completion, and beyond.

710 - 900 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 1E5
604.639.3639 | www.civiclegal.ca |  CivicLegal