



Household energy security
for all is possible

HOME ENERGY JUSTICE FORUM

Proceedings Report



April 12, 2023 in Vancouver, BC
on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Territories



Our Community Energy program is committed to a future in which energy justice is achieved in Canada — where everyone has affordable access to essential home energy services while living in comfortable, healthy homes. This transition will also catalyze a future in which communities use localized, climate safe, and resilient energy systems.

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“Without intentionally considering equity in our approaches to energy cost burdens and energy efficiency, we simply won’t be able to reach our climate goals. This forum is a first step towards becoming aware of these inequities and then rolling our sleeves up to change what we do.”

- Yasmin Abraham, President, Kambo Energy Group

| The Event

On April 12, 2023, Ecotrust Canada hosted Canada's first Energy Justice Forum. Over 80 attendees came together in Vancouver, BC, on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Territories, and envisioned an end to energy insecurity, with a focus on British Columbia, where low-carbon home retrofits, energy affordability, and extreme heat resilience are increasingly seen as critical and holistic policy issues.

This all-day event allowed policymakers to engage directly with impacted communities, subject matter experts, Indigenous organizations, and advocates. Together, the attendees reviewed the policies, actions, and initiatives that need the most attention to ensure that in the near future, all British Columbians will have access to clean, affordable energy, and safe, climate-resilient homes.





The Central Issue

Having access to affordable clean energy should not be a luxury in Canada. Yet, a million Canadian households experience energy insecurity, also called energy poverty. This means families are suffering from high rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and mould-related illnesses caused by living in cold, poorly ventilated homes. In many cases, people must choose between paying their heating bills or paying for life's other essentials. And it means these households are more vulnerable to extreme heat and a changing climate.

We believe that household energy security for all is possible — a Canada where all households:

- can access essential home energy services like heating, cooling, cooking, and lighting without hardship
- are able to live in comfortable, healthy homes with affordable energy bills
- rely on low-carbon energy sources that contribute to healthy environments and help address the climate emergency



Homes in Prince Rupert, BC, on Coast Ts'msyen Territory

Attendees

Over 80 attendees contributed to the Home Energy Justice Forum. Top officials from Natural Resources Canada, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low-Carbon Innovation were among those in attendance. Participants at the Forum reiterated the need for cross-ministry and cross-government initiatives that are accountable for ensuring that everyone has a healthy, comfortable, and energy-efficient place to live.

The following organizations were represented at the Forum:

- Aboriginal Housing Management Association
- Alberta Ecotrust Foundation
- BC Federation of Labour
- BC Housing
- BC Hydro
- BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
- BC Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association
- CAN Leaders Network (BCPRC)
- City of North Vancouver
- City of Vancouver
- CityHive
- CoEfficient Building Science
- Community Energy Association
- Create Climate Equity
- District of Saanich
- David Suzuki Foundation
- Ecotrust Canada
- Efficiency Canada
- Emergency Planning Secretariat
- BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low-Carbon Innovation
- EmpowerMe
- Energy Futures Lab
- FortisBC
- Fraser Basin Council
- Heiltsuk Nation
- Introba
- Iron and Earth
- Kambo Energy Group
- Leq'a:mel First Nation
- Musqueam Indian Band
- Natural Resources Canada
- Nuxalk Nation
- Pembina Institute
- Prince George Native Friendship Centre
- Royal Roads University
- BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Simon Fraser University
- Swiilawiid Sustainability Society
- UBC
- UBC Housing Research Collaborative
- Vancity
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Vancouver Economic Commission
- Vancouver Native Housing Society
- ZEBx
- Zone II Ratepayers



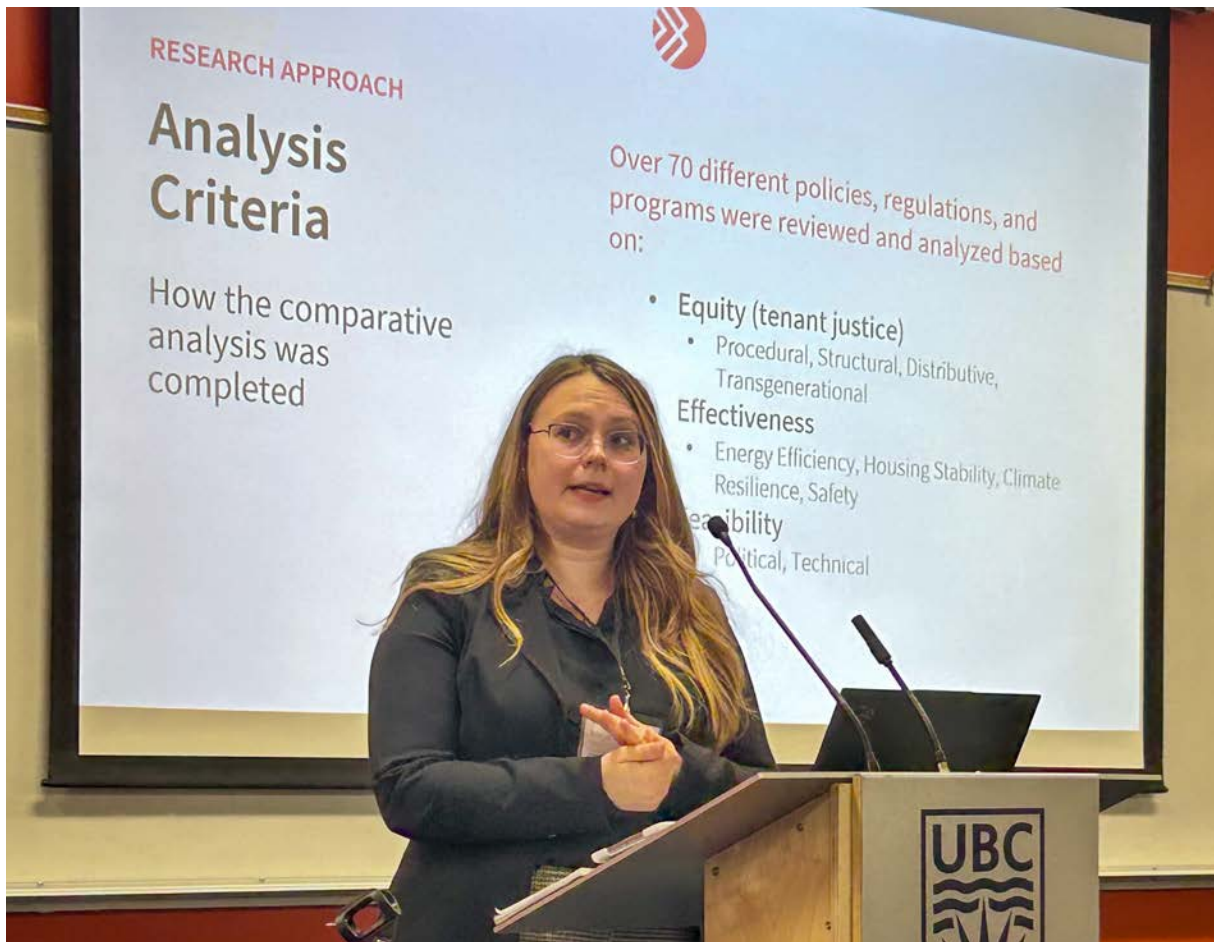
Presentations and Panelists

At the Forum, we heard from over a dozen speakers, including two UBC graduate students who collaborated with Ecotrust Canada over the past six months to produce new research on equitable decarbonization of homes, and energy efficiency rights for tenants. After hearing from our expert panellists on these subjects, participants had the opportunity to workshop the ideas and recommendations that surfaced to refine them further and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. We found that there was a surprising amount of alignment around the path forward despite the very diverse backgrounds and fields of practice that attendees each brought to their tables. The themes and practices noted here were drawn from the notes of facilitated table discussions as well as questions and comments raised in the plenary by both speakers and participants.

[Copies of workshop slides are available here](#)

[Video recordings are available here](#)

[UBC sustainability scholars' research reports](#)



| Themes

Attendees were united in their call for more public investment and a ramping up of programs to retrofit and build affordable, safe housing in BC. They advocated for a human rights and public health-centric approach, one that directs public money to those who need it most, rather than subsidizing wealthy homeowners and landlords who have the means to improve their homes and buildings. Attendees spoke of a disconnect between the design model of existing retrofit programs, and outcomes that support equity. Many suggested that energy efficiency and retrofit programs should be designed and delivered by the communities they serve – or at the least, by a government or third-party agency rather than by utilities, who have historically failed to deliver meaningful results.

Participants were nearly unanimous in their calls to end subsidies for polluting fossil gas appliances, halt new connections to gas, and equitably phase out gas infrastructure. On the other hand, participants were also united in their support for electrification as the most cost-effective way to decarbonize homes and, with heat pumps, provide cooling during extreme heat events. A just transition strategy to retrain gasfitters as heat pump technicians could help to address labour shortages and accelerate electrification even further.



“It’s not just about improving the energy efficiency of homes, but making sure that people have a place they belong to, a place to call home that’s affordable and meets their needs.”

– Abhilash Kantamneni, Research Associate, Efficiency Canada



In the afternoon at the Forum, we took a deep dive into tenants' energy rights and different pathways to ensure that rental suites are affordable to heat, safe and comfortable to live in, and can be cooled during extreme heat events. While this is a relatively new area of policy development in BC, several possible pathways were explored, including regulating rental suites through building codes, the Residential Tenancy Act, and utility bill cost-sharing schemes between landlords and tenants. While opinions differed on the best way to reach this notoriously

difficult-to-reach segment of the housing stock, attendees agreed that any policies or programs to improve energy performance must not lead to a loss of rental housing, or give landlords an opportunity to evict tenants and increase rents. Many participants also agreed that increasing the share of cooperative, non-profit and public housing might be a more effective pathway to tenants' energy rights than incentivizing or regulating landlords, who typically see housing as an investment vehicle rather than through a human rights lens.



Workshop Session 1: Equitable Decarbonization







In this session, participants considered which policy pathways might be most effective, realistic or credible for achieving an equitable decarbonization of BC's residential buildings stock by 2050, and what specific actions would be needed to make them possible. The following panel presentations and discussions informed this session (key research and resources linked):

- **Betsy Agar**, Buildings Director, Pembina Institute, Blog: [Canada urgently needs a Green Buildings Strategy](#)
- **Margaryta Pustova**, UBC Sustainability Scholar, Research: [Paving the Way for Equitable Decarbonization of British Columbia's Residential Homes](#)
- **Yasmin Abraham**, President and Co-Founder, Kambo Energy Group, Research: [Empower Me Evaluation Report](#)
- **Runa Das**, Associate Professor, Royal Roads University, runa.das@royalroads.ca, Research: [Keeping the Lights On: Ensuring energy affordability, equity and access in the transition to clean electricity in Canada](#)
- **Craig Brown**, Climate Change and Health Lead, Vancouver Coastal Health, Climate change and health research, [Policy Tools To Create and Support Cooler, Safer Indoor Living Spaces](#), infographics, story map, and other resources are [available here](#). Extreme heat resources, including heat check-in support framework [here](#).
- **Jordan Koe**, Housing Manager, Tsawout Nation



Craig Brown, Senior Scientist, Climate Change and Health at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) spoke about a review of policy and regulatory options that could increase thermal safety in homes within the VCH health region.

Residential retrofit impacts

Retrofits / year	Investment	Electricity demand	Carbon by 2050	GDP / year	Jobs / year
					
+600,000	+\$277 billion	-10%	-90%	+\$34 billion	+138,000

PEMBINA
institute

A slide from Betsy Agar's presentation showing the possible impacts for deep residential retrofits.



**Shortcomings:
Equity**

-  Failure to encourage retrofits in rental properties
-  Insufficient funding support for retrofits in non-profit, social, and low-income housing
-  Lock-in of natural gas systems may exacerbate future energy insecurity
-  Failure to consider equity in climate adaptation
-  Low-ambition policy and a lack of accountability is unjust to equity-deserving groups, developing nations and future generations

Margaryta Pustova, UBC Sustainability Scholar, presented on the shortcomings of existing policies and programs as part of her research on *Paving the Way for Equitable Decarbonization of British Columbia's Residential Homes*.

Ideas were gathered into three categories:

1) new practices to start, 2) current practices to end, and 3) current practices to continue.

New practices called for

Participants demonstrated strong alignment around initiating new practices in programming, regulation, and legislation in the retrofit industry and addressing energy poverty and equity issues.

Ideas concerning the energy efficiency retrofit related **industry** focused on education and engagement. These include an electrification-oriented green jobs program, education specific to retrofits and home energy assessments, efforts to both encourage new members to enter the industry as well as retain quality professionals, and a system [\(as exists in the UK\)](#) to engage and incentivize contractors on energy efficiency. A need to strengthen supply chains, and provide stability and long-term signals to the industry was also noted.

To improve **equity outcomes**, the need to include and prioritize **tenants and rental units** in energy efficiency regulation (such as rental energy efficiency requirements) and programs (such as retrofit rebates) was highlighted. There was a strong and recurring emphasis that any such measures would need to ensure that tenants would be protected from rent increases, evictions, or loss of affordable housing units resulting from upgrades. Programs specifically targeting multi-unit rental buildings were called for. More broadly, participants called for low-income utility rates, the right to cooling, and a federal low-income energy efficiency strategy, as well as pursuing [zonal electrification](#).

Ideas for programming revolved around three key calls:

1) Community leadership:

Participants noted again and again that for programming to be effective and equitable, it needs to be designed and implemented by the community that it intends to reach. This would include, for instance, involving members of the target group in program design to ensure it meets their needs, and partnering with community-based and community-led organizations that operate in a culturally appropriate manner as program delivery agents. This would likely also address other concerns, such as lowering barriers to program participation, and providing targeted education (e.g., on heat pumps, or impacts on utility bill costs).

2) Integration and holistic approach: The integration and streamlining of programs were highlighted as a way to reduce the complexity of multiple points of contact and sources of information and funding, for instance, via a one-stop shop or the creation of an energy efficiency-focused agency.

Further, many groups noted the need to be more holistic in the approach to energy efficiency work, so that it takes into account non-energy aspects of homes and addresses safety issues, deferred maintenance, as well as housing stock deficiencies. This would require targets and funding that go beyond lowering energy uses and GHG emissions, and also cover outcomes such as climate adaptation, improved health and safety, and reduced operating costs to the occupants.

3) Better evaluation: Participants called for improved evaluation, in alignment with more holistic goals; improved transparency, including

the accessibility of data to measure program effectiveness; and accountability to affected communities. Specific suggestions included monetizing all aspects of retrofits in cost-effectiveness evaluation (including grid impacts, carbon, risk, and resilience), and taking a life cycle cost approach.

Calls for new legislation and regulation included a national or provincial strategy for energy poverty with binding targets, a building alterations code for BC, and gradually applying GHG limits to all buildings (not only when altered). Further, a review of the Utilities Commission Act was proposed for better access to affordable low-carbon energy, to embed social and equity goals in the BC Utilities Commission's mandate, and to require utilities to align their actions with provincial climate targets.

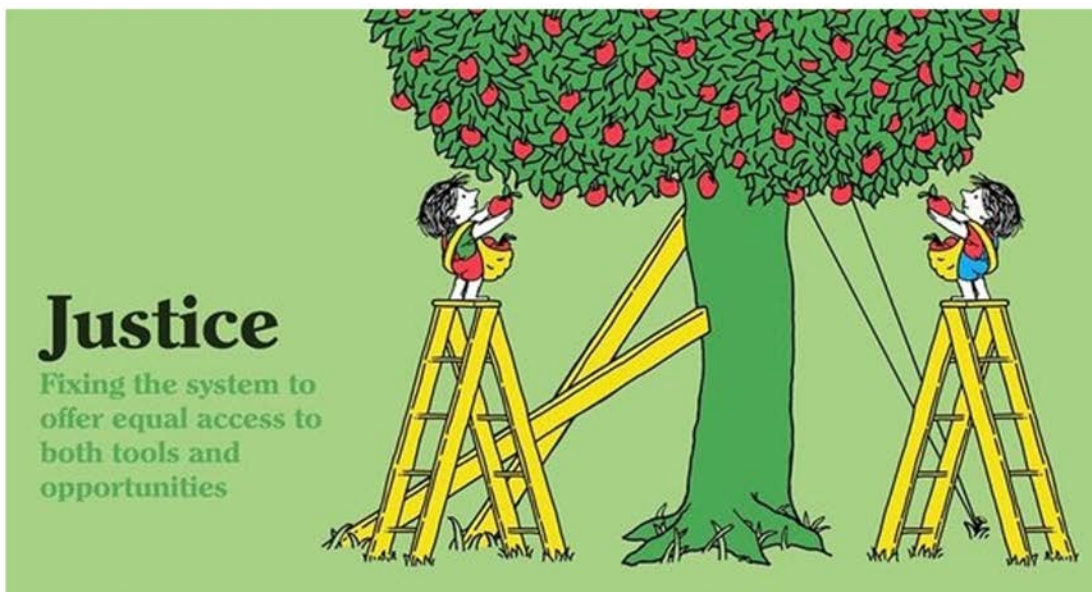
Desired financing mechanisms include a [commercial property-assessed clean energy](#) (C-PACE) program for multi-unit residential buildings, and a province-wide [on-bill financing](#) or [on-bill tariff program](#) from utilities. Finally, mandatory energy efficiency ratings and

requirements were suggested.

Current practices to discontinue

Participants demonstrated strong alignment to **stop** the following practices:

- Ownership of energy efficiency programming within utilities
- Working in siloes (calls for holistic, multi-government, multi-department collaboration instead)
- Subsidizing wealthy owners/developers/investors with unfocused or regressive incentives
- Restrictive strata policies (e.g., not allowing heat pumps)
- Tenant displacement/renovictions
- Insufficient, disparate data sets
- Lowest cost bids in procurement (esp. for public projects)
- Funding gas rebates, equipment and



infrastructure, as well as new gas connections and [natural gas industry disinformation](#)

Current practices to continue

Participants were generally supportive of several practices, policies, and programs that are currently ongoing. Overall support was voiced for investment in communities, energy efficiency standards and retrofit requirements, raising awareness and communicating the multiple co-benefits of retrofits, and efforts to harmonize funding across programs and consolidate access points (e.g., [Better Homes BC](#)). Other current and appreciated practices include: [District energy systems](#), support for jobs training and just transition, targeted contractor engagement and education (e.g., Red Seal / certified renovator system), as well as work to fill data gaps via

field trials, research, and qualitative and lived experience data.

Support for equity and justice-focused practices found in public programs providing free or subsidized retrofits for income-qualified households and social housing, efforts to provide air conditioners as medical equipment, work toward a “[right to cooling](#),” utility bill relief, equitable program designs, as well as education and information in diverse communities, languages, formats.

Support for a new [climate-aligned energy framework](#) for the Province with a strong justice component.



Attendees engage in the Workshop 1 discussion on “How does energy (in)justice show up in, or relate to your work?”



Workshop Session 2: Tenants' Rights

This session focused specifically on ways to include tenants in efforts to make homes more energy-efficient, resilient, safe, and affordable. The following panel presentations informed the discussion (key research and resources linked):

- **Maya Korbynn**, UBC Sustainability Scholar, Research: [The Missing Third: Improving Tenants' Rights to Energy Efficient, Climate Resilient, and Safe Housing](#)
- **Abhilash Kantamneni**, Research Associate, Efficiency Canada, Research: [Efficiency for All: A review of provincial/territorial low-income energy efficiency programs with lessons for federal policy in Canada](#) [Energy Efficiency in Rental Housing](#)
- **Ian Cullis**, Director of Asset Management, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Resources: [Canadian Rental Housing Index](#)
- **Rowan Burdge**, Executive Director, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, Resources: [Blueprint for Justice, Extreme Heat and Human Mortality: A Review of Heat-Related Deaths in B.C. in Summer 2021](#) (Report to the Chief Coroner), [Sweltering Cities](#): Why extreme heat is killing Canadians in major cities and how climate change will make things worse (CBC) [Renters Face Another Hot Summer with Scant Protections](#) (*The Tyee*)
- **Colin Doylend**, Director, Land Development & Acquisitions, Vancouver Native Housing Society

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Foundational Initiatives

Helping quantify and describe BC's private rental housing stock



These four initiatives help support subsequent policy and programs



Make a provincial rental housing registry



Add a rental energy disclosure requirement to the Residential Tenancy Act



Mandate using future climate files for energy audits



Enable the creation of a labelling system for residential energy efficiency & climate adaptation

Recommendations from Maya Korbynn's presentation on her research titled "The Missing Third."



“Energy insecurity, affordability, and justice is a vital, pressing issue for many folks across BC, especially those on low incomes. The right to heating and cooling, affordable energy for cooking, lighting, and other fundamental, essential household tasks should be assured. Yet, this is not the case for many in BC.”

– Rowan Burdge, Executive Director, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition

Participants considered three possible pathways to improving tenants’ rights to energy efficiency and cooling in their suites:

- 1) Provincial regulations and building codes
- 2) The Residential Tenancy Act and/or rental licences
- 3) Utility cost splitting

All three pathways were presented as being accompanied by an energy efficiency retrofit support program with an affordability covenant to avoid rent increases and a requirement to involve tenants in the renovation planning process. The strengths, weaknesses, and potential unintended consequences of each pathway were discussed, and changes to improve each option were brainstormed. Key ideas are summarized in each of the pathways.

Pathway 1: Requiring energy efficiency and cooling in all homes through provincial regulations and building codes.

This involves inserting specific requirements for energy efficiency, safety, and climate resiliency in the up-and-coming building code for existing buildings (the Alterations Code), as well as a planned introduction of [cooling requirements](#) for new buildings to the BC Building Code.

Participants identified multiple strengths for this pathway, perhaps most importantly its predictability and consistency across the province, providing focus and scale, enabling systemic alignment and bulk coordination in implementation, and addressing multiple provincial goals at once.

A notable weakness of this pathway is that building codes don't apply to existing buildings yet. Weaknesses were also related to the all-encompassing scale of this approach, including potential difficulties such as stratifying it across the province, loss of nuance, making it hard to innovate, and equity challenges. Other weaknesses included the resources required for enforcement and compliance, financial difficulty in the ability to meet requirements, and the possibility of discouraging new entrants to the

rental market.

High quality of new builds was noted as a positive unintended consequence of energy efficiency and cooling requirements being provincially regulated, while people losing homes was identified as a negative unintended consequence. Participants also noted that there are widely differing abilities to pay for upgrades among landlords, and that provincial regulation of this kind may lead to the formation of specialist (opportunist) job roles.

- The BC government must also work closely with health authorities, municipalities, and Indigenous Nations to resource cooling, heating, and disaster mitigation strategies that work for local communities, informed by lived experiences of people who are most impacted by extreme weather events. This includes low-income people, who are more likely to be living in heat-impacted neighbourhoods.
- Resources, materials, and extreme weather warnings must be available in accessible formats, be multilingual, and direct outreach needs address the digital divide, as many unhoused people do not have access to the internet, devices, or digital literacy that equip them with the tools to receive this information solely from virtual formats.
- Issuing cooling devices to people who are experiencing poverty is essential in preventing suffering, and mitigating the harms of heat.

A slide from Rowan Burdge's presentation on Energy Justice for Tenants.

Pathway 2: Requiring energy efficiency, cooling and healthy rental suites through the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) and rental licences.

This involves changing the Residential Tenancy Act to include wording on minimum and maximum interior temperatures, and including prescriptive requirements for air filtration.

Key strengths of this pathway included this being a rights-based approach that establishes a baseline, that the RTA already has an enforcement mechanism in place, and that it could also be combined with enforcement of other health and safety issues such as mould or pests. Participants also noted, as a positive, that this approach places responsibility on the landlord/owner and that it could leverage insurance policies.

Several of the identified weaknesses of this

pathway centre on potential adverse impacts on tenants, including the possibility of renovictions (evictions of tenants with renovations cited as the reason) or of loss of housing if landlords choose not to comply, as well as the burden of reporting violations likely falling on tenants. This leads to another major challenge of this pathway – enforcement.

The Residential Tenancy Branch is already overburdened, would require additional resourcing, and is reportedly hard to use. Opaque wording could make interpretation and outcomes unreliable, and further, access to justice is generally difficult or unattainable for the most vulnerable. Participants were also concerned about possible unintended impacts on utility bills and who is responsible for paying them (e.g., Landlord BC highlights shifting to [tenants paying for utilities](#) as a driver of MURB electrification), as well as impacts on lower-income landlords and their capacity to comply without raising rents.

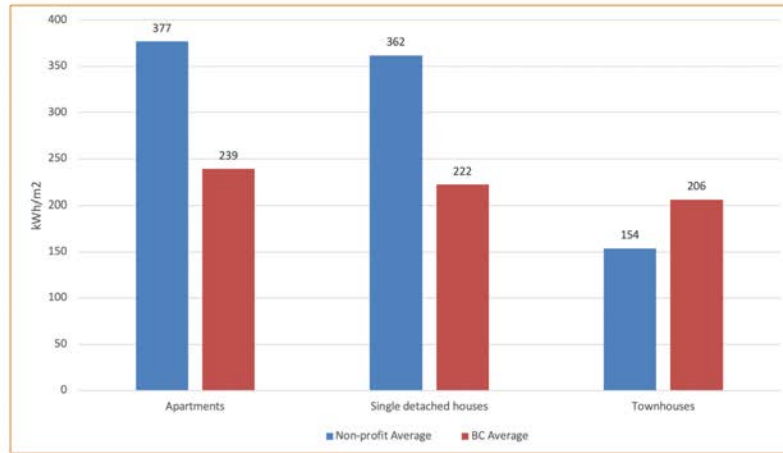
Renter's Bill of Rights -

Rental efficiency policy must be designed to deliver these rights

- Right to information on energy performance
- Right to prior and informed consent
- Right to maintain residence & tenure
- Right to collective organizing & legal aid
- Right to well-being at home

Abhilash Kantamneni presented on achieving “affordable, appropriate, secure, and high-performance housing for all.”

Energy Intensity: Non-Profit vs Average residential buildings in BC (kWh/m²)



Based on 2010 BCNPHA Asset Management survey of 1,000 buildings



Empowering BC's non-profit housing sector through advocacy, education and support.

Ian Cullis gave a presentation overviewing the BC Non-Profit Housing Association.

To address some of these concerns, participants suggested several changes and accompanying actions to this pathway. Regarding the Residential Tenancy Branch, participants called for an expanded mandate, including creating a peoples' forum and taking a role in advocacy and awareness work, as well as better enforcement against mould, pests, and other unhealthy living conditions. More broadly, participants identified a need to improve baseline security of tenure for renters via a deeper rewrite of the RTA, as well as improved pathways to enforcement, arbitration, and remediation for tenants. Taking steps to ensure lower-income landlords can comply with new RTA requirements without raising rent, and implementing a licensing scheme for landlords was also suggested.

Pathway 3: Splitting utility costs in rental suites between landlords and tenants.

This pathway addresses the split incentive problem by proposing a change to the Residential Tenancy Act that would tie the payment of utilities to the unit's energy performance. Landlords would be responsible for the payment of utilities in inefficient homes, while tenants would pay for utilities in energy-efficient homes.

Participants found the strengths of this proposal to lie in its potential to create a strong, solid baseline on a provincial scale and potentially incentivize landlords to improve their suite's energy efficiency voluntarily. They noted that such a scheme could combine well with on-bill financing if that were to be offered, as well as with net metering. It would require data availability,

PATHWAY 3

Strengths

- Addresses split incentive dilemma
- Performance-based approach is more effective and reduces loopholes

Weaknesses

- Requires pre-existing energy scoring/labelling system
- Requires a rethink of how energy is billed
- May not be a significant incentive with low energy prices

Maya Korbynn's presentation examined the strengths and weaknesses of utility cost splitting.

and a licensing scheme for landlords, to assess impacts and ensure compliance.

Participants also noted that the spectrum of landlords varies greatly, that this idea may be more applicable to public housing, and that it would need to involve trust and collaboration to be successful. Overall, participants found that there are a lot of barriers and high risks, including renovictions, potential tenant selection discrimination, and increases in utility costs, resulting in overall weak support for this pathway.

Aside from considering the relative merits of the three policy pathways, participants noted that the financialization of housing presents a major barrier to approaching housing reform from a human rights perspective. The current barriers associated with the landlord-tenant split incentive are directly related to the use of housing as an

investment vehicle and means of capital gains for landlords. Participants noted that an increase in cooperative, non-profit and public housing would be a more effective pathway to ensuring energy rights for tenants than attempting to either incentivize or regulate landlords to improve rental suites.



Closing Session: Government Panel

- **Phil Climie** in lieu of **Pamela Wilson**, Owner, Tagila Consulting and Former Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Nation
- **Chris Higgins**, Senior Green Building Planner, City of Vancouver
- **Nathaniel Gosman**, Executive Director, Built Environment, BC Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Low-Carbon Innovation
- **Ben Copp**, Senior Director, Office of Energy Efficiency, Natural Resources Canada

As the Forum drew to a close, we heard from government officials, who reflected back on the events of the day and recognized the call for a holistic, ambitious mobilization to end energy insecurity and provide safe, affordable and clean home energy as a key solution to the climate, housing, and health care crises currently facing Canadians. The entire room recognized that this effort will take a tremendous amount of time, money, effort and heart – and that no one agency can address these issues alone. Yet, we all recognized that the consequences of inaction – uninsurable, unhealthy buildings, illness and death, escalating bills and poverty – are untenable.

“In order to meet this challenge ahead of us and to create a built environment that is resilient, that is carbon-neutral, that gives us comfortable conditions to live in for the future and for years to come, it is going to require a national effort, and for governments and industry and communities across Canada to come together.”

– Ben Copp, Senior Director, Office of Energy Efficiency, Natural Resources Canada





Chris Higgins presented on the City of Vancouver’s future goals to “to lead the energy transition in a less unjust way.”

Goals

Understand the Present

Pilot to understand gaps in current Utility and Provincial offer

Follow Leaders

Free Heat Pumps for income qualified:
PEI & Nova Scotia

One Click Heat Pump

For an income qualified household have the utility offer turnkey application and installation




Next Steps

The Forum left us with a deeper sense of commitment to each other in our mission to pursue home energy justice in our communities. Our planned next steps emerging from the Forum include a call to action by attending organizations, encouraging the government to bring BC's [Income-Qualified Program](#) in line with Atlantic provinces, providing 100% cost coverage for heat pumps in lower-income homes.

“I’d like [...] ideally get to a point where, if someone’s in an income-qualified home, they just say, “I want to put a heat pump in,” and then [...] the utility comes, they install it, you get lower operating cost, and you don’t have to worry about having challenges.”

– Chris Higgins, Senior Green Building Planner, City of Vancouver



- ▶ We also plan to create a research and advocacy working group to explore the issue of tenants’ energy rights and rights to cooling in homes and workplaces. The Forum demonstrated this is a particularly complex issue, with many risks to consider, including the housing crisis, rising rents, and the prevalence of evictions and predatory landlords in BC compared to other Provinces.



“We saw amazing ideas and connections take shape at the Forum, and I’m looking forward to continuing the work with this group to turn our vision of energy justice for all into a reality.”

– Dylan Heerema, Senior Policy Advisor, Ecotrust Canada

Appendix: Speaker Biographies



Squamish Nation Elder Xele'milh-Doris Paul

To welcome us to the territory, we were honoured to introduce Xele'milh-Doris Paul, elder and community leader from the Squamish Nation. Xele'milh is an unwavering volunteer who brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to achieve safety, health and shared understanding in her North Vancouver community.

She has founded and worked on many initiatives, including an integrated policing unit with Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and police, the North Shore's Violence Against Women Committee, and as a court Elder. She was awarded BC Achievement's Community Award in 2007 and is a proud recipient of the inaugural British Columbia Reconciliation Award in 2021.



Dr. Abhilash Kantamneni, Research Associate, Efficiency Canada

Abhilash Kantamneni (Abhi) is a Research Associate at Efficiency Canada, where he leads the research and advocacy on energy poverty and low-income energy efficiency policy. His community-based approach research and advocacy on energy poverty has earned him wide recognition including being named a '40 Under 40 Energy Leader' by the Midwest Energy News and a Canada Storyteller Award by SSHRC-CRSH. He holds a B.E in Electrical Engineering, a M.S. in Physics and a M.S in Computer Science



Andrea Harris, VP Impact Strategy, Vancity

Following her passion for marrying business with social and environmental change, Andrea Harris joined Vancity in 2003 and is currently the VP, Impact Strategy, where she leads a team focused on achieving Vancity's goal of Net Zero by 2040, increasing the financial resilience of members and vulnerable communities, and, with a spirit of Reconciliation, working with community partners to create a just energy transition.

A lifelong advocate of co-operatives, Andrea sits on the Board of the BC Co-operative Association.



Ben Copp, Senior Director, Office of Energy Efficiency, Natural Resources Canada

Ben Copp is a Senior Director in the Office of Energy Efficiency at Natural Resources Canada. Ben has worked in the federal government for almost 17 years, and prior to joining NRCan, has held senior positions at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, and the Privy Council Office.

Prior to joining the federal government, Ben worked in the Ministry of Finance with the Government of BC, and for two BC municipalities. Ben lives in Ottawa on unceded, unsundered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People, with his wife and three sons.



**Betsy Agar, Program Director - Buildings,
Pembina Institute**

Betsy Agar is the director of the Pembina Institute’s buildings program. Through engagement, research and knowledge mobilization, she works on systems changes that will accelerate decarbonization of homes and buildings, such as through policy and regulatory reform and market transformation. Betsy’s work spans multiple government levels in Ontario, Alberta, and B.C. on topics including deep retrofit market development team best practices, retrofitting for climate resilience, health, safety and affordability, industry readiness, and understanding our building stock.

Betsy’s prior professional experience includes buildings science engineering failure investigation, facility and bridge condition evaluation, design and field inspection; facilitation and convening dialogues as a co-creator of Renewable Cities at SFU Centre for Dialogue; research and teaching at McMaster University, as well as teaching at UBC and SFU.



**Chris Higgins, Senior Green Building Planner,
City of Vancouver**

Chris develops and implements building bylaw, policy, and incentive programs to achieve new buildings that run without fossil fuels, while at the same time helping to reduce greenhouses gases from existing homes. He works to remove barriers to existing home retrofits, and possesses an understanding of regulatory and incentive options a city has at its disposal. Chris is a spokesperson at national conferences and to various media outlets.

Chris worked for the Canada Green Building Council from 2008-2014, developed the LEED Canada for Homes program for single along with multifamily homes and supported its delivery in all provinces and two territories. Chris has served on the board of directors for Passive House Canada. Chris is a Newfoundlander but has made British Columbia his home for the last two decades.



Colin Doyle, Director, Land Development & Acquisitions, Vancouver Native Housing Society

Over the last twenty years, Colin has represented the interests of Indigenous communities, industry, and government towards building legacies of economic wealth that foster traditions, culture, and environmental stewardship. Colin has a passion for new and innovative projects that involve Indigenous communities, clean technology, and social ventures.

Through his experience with modular construction and as a certified social housing manager (CertCIH), Colin is most proud of his work with the Yale First Nation, where they developed ten affordable housing units that were built to the Passive House construction standard.

Today, Colin serves as the Director of Land Development for the Vancouver Native Housing Society, where they are currently in construction of an 81-units of universally designed affordable housing built to the Passive House standard.



Dr. Craig Brown, Climate Change and Health Lead, Vancouver Coastal Health

Craig Brown is the Senior Scientist, Climate Change and Health at Vancouver Coastal Health Authority where he supports climate change adaptation projects in the health sector, with a strong emphasis on community collaboration.

Craig is also an associate faculty member at Royal Roads University in the School of Environment and Sustainability, and has served as an author on national and international climate change knowledge assessments, including the IPCC Sixth Assessment report.



**Dylan Heerema, Senior Policy Advisor,
Ecotrust Canada**

Dylan is a policy and technical expert with a passion for energy justice and community resilience. Originally from Treaty 7 Territory in the Alberta foothills, a strong connection to the coast brought Dylan to BC and Tla’amin Nation Territory, where he works on energy efficiency, diesel reduction, and renewable energy initiatives for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Canada.

Dylan is a Professional Engineer and Energy Advisor, with a M.Eng. in Clean Energy Engineering from the University of British Columbia. Over the past decade, he has worked extensively with governments, communities, industry and NGOs on climate and energy policy. Dylan also brings experience in the utility planning and regulatory process to the Community Energy team, which he joined in 2019.



**Ian Cullis, Director of Asset Management,
BC Non-Profit Housing Association**

Ian Cullis is Director of Asset Management for BCNPHA. His role allows him to develop funding solutions, incentive programs, and curriculum to support building renewal while coaching non-profit housing providers through capital planning, maintenance planning, and building retrofit projects.

He is driven by a passion for sustainable buildings, the desire to help others, and a sense of accomplishment when people have access to more sustainable housing solutions. Outside of work, Ian has a family of five, whom he enjoys taking outdoors mountain biking, skiing, and hiking.



**Jordan Koe, Housing Manager,
Tsawout First Nation**

Jordan Koe is Tetlit Gwich'in First Nation and a recent graduate of the Master of Sustainability in Energy Security Program at the University of Saskatchewan. Jordan is passionate about Indigenous housing justice, energy justice, poverty reduction, and harm reduction, and has been in the field of housing in both the rural and urban houseless community.

He is currently the Housing Manager for the Tsawout First Nation and a Project Manager in Ecotrust Canada's Community Energy team.



**Josephine Schrott, Community Energy Analyst,
Ecotrust Canada**

As an Analyst for Ecotrust Canada's Community Energy Initiative, Josephine works towards policies enabling energy efficiency, decarbonization, and resilience in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, while leading retrofit programming and financing projects in coastal BC communities. She has over seven years of experience working towards equitable, sustainable, and vibrant communities, using her skills in research, project management, and operations.

Josephine completed a Master's degree in Comparative Law, Economics, and Finance at the International University College of Turin in Italy, and a BA in International Relations at UBC.



Margaryta Pustova, UBC Sustainability Scholar

Margaryta is a graduate student at the University of British Columbia, passionate about equitable decarbonization and climate change adaptation policies, climate change perception, and communication. Her graduate research focuses on investigating the impact of extreme weather events on the public's preferences regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation actions.

Additionally, Margaryta has collaborated with Ecotrust Canada on a UBC Sustainability Scholar research project aimed at evaluating existing policies and programs promoting residential homes decarbonization in British Columbia and proposing policy pathways to advance equitable decarbonization of the province's residential sector. Ultimately, Margaryta is committed to bridging the gap between climate science and climate action.



Maya Korbynn, UBC Sustainability Scholar

Maya is a Master of Community and Regional Planning student and sustainability professional that is passionate about making better places for people. She focuses on climate adaptation and mitigation, strategic planning and placemaking, and emergency response planning. She is a systems thinker that has a multi-disciplinary background in civil engineering technology, technical research, communications, and tourism.



Nathaniel Gosman, Executive Director, Built Environment, BC Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Low-Carbon Innovation

Nat Gosman is Executive Director of the Built Environment Branch at the BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation. Nat’s team is responsible for policies and programs that advance energy efficient, low-carbon technologies and practices in the built environment through R&D, incentives, and standards.

This portfolio includes the CleanBC Building Innovation Fund, CleanBC Better Homes and Better Buildings Program and Energy Efficiency Standards Regulation. The Built Environment Branch is highly collaborative, working with partners at all levels of government to develop and implement initiatives that improve energy efficiency, decarbonize energy use, and foster economic development in BC’s building sector and communities.



Pamela Wilson, Owner, Tagila Consulting and Former Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Nation

Pamela Wilson, an entrepreneur born and raised in Bella Bella, BC, owns and operates her own consulting business. She is currently working to expand to provide custom-designed programs focusing on health and wellness needs for First Nations communities.

Pamela is a member of the Heiltsuk Nation, and her business, Tagila Consulting name comes from a Heiltsuk value that means, “to provide advice and encouragement when and where appropriate.” For the last 10 years, Pamela has shared her passion by assisting First Nations with various initiatives related to governance, health, program evaluation and design.



Rowan Burdge, Executive Director, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition

Rowan Burdge (she/they) is the Provincial Director of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC). They are a disabled, white settler living on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations. Rowan is a queer chronically ill advocate and organizer who works towards poverty reduction with and for marginalized communities across BC.



Dr. Runa Das, Associate Professor, Royal Roads University

Dr. Runa Das is an Associate Professor in the College of Interdisciplinary Studies at Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC. She received her PhD in Environmental Applied Science and Management from Toronto Metropolitan University and holds previous degrees in psychology. Her interdisciplinary research focuses mostly on residential energy use. She is currently working on the study of equitable household energy transition in Canada, which includes the study of energy poverty.

Runa is the current Steering Committee Chair of Women and Inclusivity in Sustainable Energy Research (WISER): a global network of women and non-binary academics in the field of clean, low-carbon, or sustainable energy research. In addition to academics, Runa has provided consultation to government, environmental, and not-for-profit organizations.



Yasmin Abraham, President and Co-Founder, Kambo Energy Group

Yasmin is Co-Founder of Kambo Energy Group and the visionary behind Empower Me, Canada's only energy and climate focused program designed for, and delivered by, members of underserved communities. Under Yasmin's leadership, Kambo has become a leader and advocate for the inclusion of lower income families in climate policies, specifically advocating for supports for families experiencing energy poverty. Kambo's Community Power division is dedicated exclusively to improving housing conditions in Indigenous communities.

Yasmin is a leading expert in equity-based energy and climate programming, working with governments and utilities across Canada to design and deliver inclusive solutions. Yasmin has assembled an employee roster representative of the communities they serve – 59% identify as visible minority, immigrant and/or multilingual, and 53% of employees are female.



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