

September 12, 2022

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Delivered via email: justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca; pm@pm.gc.ca

Subject: Prioritizing Communities and Driving Investment in the Canadian Green Building Strategy

Dear Prime Minister,

QUEST Canada commends the Government of Canada (the Government) for the important action it has taken to date to advance building energy emissions reduction, and for recognizing that a national strategy is needed to mobilize all parts of the building sector if Canada is to meet its 2050 net-zero target. **The centrality of buildings to the lives of Canadians cannot be overstated – nor, with over 16 million buildings in Canada whose emissions need to be addressed, can the scope and scale of the work and investment needed in the building energy sector for Canada to meet its goals.** On that note, we have some suggestions we believe will strengthen the Government's approach.

The Canadian Green Building Strategy (CGBS) Discussion Paper identifies six thematic areas that together are meant to provide a comprehensive framework for the development of the strategy. Respectfully, QUEST Canada would suggest adding two more principles, as follows:

- **Partner with Communities:** Communities will be key partners in implementing the National Green Buildings Strategy. Their input, needs, and potential roles and contributions must be considered at every stage of the Strategy's development to ensure it applies to all Canadians.
- **Focus on Outcomes, not Actions:** The Government can provide leadership through clear mandates, aggressive targets, enabling policy, and strategic investment that enable the solutions we need to be developed, tested, refined, and deployed.

The Discussion Paper presents a long list of potential actions that can drive the CGBS. QUEST Canada has identified a few gaps that we believe should be considered as the Strategy is developed:

First, consider a key building energy policy - Building Performance Standards.

We encourage the Government to consider establishing Building Performance Standards (BPS), a key building energy policy that has proven effective, equitable, and efficient in reducing building energy-related emissions and driving private investment in other jurisdictions. BPS are policies that require commercial and multifamily buildings to meet certain performance levels, typically for energy

use or greenhouse gas emissions. They have been successfully implemented in jurisdictions around the world and are effective in driving private investment, both by building owners and from institutional investors ready and searching for opportunities to help finance the energy transition.

Second, build the capacity of communities to access investment capital.

The Government must build the capacity of communities to access investment to advance building decarbonization efforts. Small and medium-sized local governments often lack the financial and legal capacity to translate local building energy investment opportunities into appropriate investment concepts. The European City Facility (EUCF) offers a program model that can help the Government target and address a specific need of cities: the development of financial know-how and capacities to develop credible investment packages and mobilize finance to accelerate investments in sustainable energy.

Third, enable complementary solutions to electrification using an integrated approach for greater affordability and reliability.

Decarbonizing space and water heating presents a considerable challenge. An integrated approach to planning for and designing our energy systems can drive down emissions more quickly and effectively than total electrification, with complementary solutions that can also help address affordability and reliability. While there are many Canadian examples of district heating projects, these important community-based solutions are not as commonplace as they should be. The Government can provide financial resources, as well as technical support and expertise, to support local governments in developing and implementing these local, complementary solutions.

Lastly, support the establishment of local champions and collaboration across sectors needed for aligned and sustained action.

The Government has been providing financial support to community building emissions reduction efforts for over two decades through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Green Municipal Fund. But access to funding addresses only the first among many obstacles: communities across Canada don't have the knowledge, experience, tools, or resources needed to put the CGBS into action. Capacity building to generate sustained and effective action at the community level requires support to establish local champions, create connections, develop alignments and collaboration across sectors, and drive investment in green building programs and projects.

QUEST Canada has established a proven approach to sustainable capacity building that addresses the particular needs of individual communities, the Net Zero Community Accelerator (NCA) program. The NCA equips diverse communities with the tools and knowledge to develop and continuously implement community energy and emissions plans and associated initiatives. The program also works to establish sustainable mutual support mechanisms by developing regional communities of practice among participating communities which allow for the sharing of ideas, experiences, best practices, and tools.



An integrated approach to energy use and emissions reduction, and supporting communities on their net-zero journey, are foundational to an inclusive and successful Green Building Strategy for Canada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tonja Leach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tonja Leach
Executive Director, QUEST Canada