

# 2024 Commercial Roundtable Summary Report: Halifax, Charlottetown, Moncton, and St. John's

## Executive Summary:

The ReCover Roundtables held in Halifax, Charlottetown, Moncton, and St. John's during the Fall of 2024 brought together diverse stakeholders committed to addressing the pressing issue of deep retrofits for commercial buildings and housing. These discussions aimed to identify barriers to effective retrofitting, share best practices, and develop actionable solutions to improve the sustainability and livability of building stock across Atlantic Canada.



Across the four sessions, participants highlighted significant challenges related to financing, workforce capacity, tenant disruption, and policy inefficiencies. Proposed solutions included enhanced government investment, streamlined financing processes, capacity building in the workforce, and better communication strategies to manage expectations and promote collaboration. Overall, a consensus emerged on the need for a coordinated approach to facilitate deep retrofits through innovative financing and robust community engagement.

This report aims to encapsulate the essence of the discussions that took place during the ReCover Roundtables, serving as a call to action and a way to establish ReCover's ability to support stakeholders committed to driving change through deep retrofits. The collaboration and insights gathered will help ReCover shape future initiatives and optimize the benefits of sustainable building practices across the region.

## Introduction:

The ReCover Initiative is a non-profit organization at the forefront of pioneering scalable deep retrofit solutions in Atlantic Canada. Founded in 2020 and based in Nova Scotia, ReCover is developing deep retrofit solutions that respond to the climate crisis at speed and scale.



ReCover is a nonprofit initiative dedicated to helping building owners across Atlantic Canada accelerate deep energy retrofits. Its focus is on creating a scalable process for retrofitting existing buildings, contributing to both environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. Through innovative programs, including process mapping, concierge services, and partnerships with equity-deserving communities, ReCover guides building owners through the complex landscape of incentives, technical requirements, and retrofit options.



ReCover believes that the greenest building is the one that already exists and is committed to empowering building owners to make impactful, cost-effective energy improvements. Central to the ReCover mission is the removal of barriers hindering deep retrofit implementation, including economic, market, and equity-related complexities.

Working with partner Building to Zero Exchange (BTZx), ReCover created a series of roundtable discussions that were a collaborative space to gather feedback, share insights, and develop solutions that scale deep retrofits for all building types.

For the series of Roundtables, one each in Nova Scotia (Halifax on October 16, 2024), Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown on October 18, 2024), New Brunswick (Moncton on October 22, 2024) and Newfoundland & Labrador (St. John's on November 6, 2024) ReCover, with BTZx acting as facilitator, invited building owners and those who significantly influenced building management and operations.

A foundational project of the ReCover Initiative was to host roundtables with members of the ICI sector working on deep retrofit construction projects, programs, and/or policies. The objective was to learn from each other about work in the sector and to brainstorm ways to support each other's objectives around deep retrofits with a lens that included equity and workforce capacity and readiness.

Participants could expect to gain information about anticipated code changes, how net-zero policies and practices would drive change in the industrial, commercial, and institutional building sector, commercial retrofit financing, and what resources were being developed to help the industry adapt. This was a chance for them to learn, network, and engage with a community committed to sustainability and energy efficiency. Their participation helped create a supportive network that empowered change.

The roundtable format combined presentations and discussion, with the goal of better understanding the industry's needs and providing an opportunity to collaborate and share ideas on net-zero preparation in the commercial sector.

- **Influenced Program Development:** Their feedback directly shaped the ReCover concierge program and future initiatives, ensuring they met specific needs.
- **Gained Insights into ReCover:** Participants learned how ReCover could support their efforts to make their buildings more energy-efficient and sustainable.
- **Received Up-to-Date Information:** They stayed informed about the latest building codes, industry changes, and upcoming events, which could impact building management and operations.

### Roundtable Participants:

- Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional Building Owners
- Facility Managers
- Property Managers
- Energy Managers
- Corporate Sustainability Officers
- Project Managers
- Architects and Engineers
- Community Interest Representative



- **Discovered Future Opportunities:** Beyond the roundtables, they became part of a growing movement toward deep retrofits in Atlantic Canada, with opportunities to collaborate on future projects.

## Analysis of Challenges:

### 1. Financial Barriers

The pressing challenge of high upfront costs consistently emerged throughout the roundtables. Participants expressed a need for more accessible financing options to support retrofitting projects, including innovative funding models such as leveraging carbon credits and establishing alliances among regional funders. Participants shared the essential requirement for a clear understanding of the long-term payback periods associated with investments, showing the economic viability of retrofits.

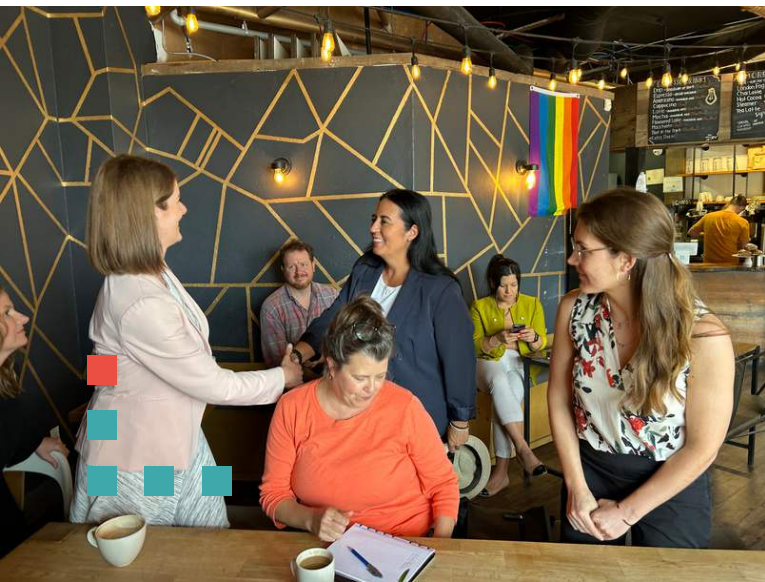


### 2. Workforce Capacity

Another significant issue identified was the shortage of skilled labour for deep retrofitting, particularly in the restoration of complex, old, or heritage buildings. The discussions underscored the necessity for training programs tailored to meet the skills gap, advocating for partnerships between educational institutions and businesses to create a well-trained workforce. The need for contractors to adopt modern skills is critical to ensuring successful retrofitting while managing tenant expectations during these processes.

### 3. Disruption and Tenant Concerns

Tenants expressed concern regarding potential disruptions during renovations. The term “renoviction” surfaced frequently, raising alarms about how to maintain affordable housing while retrofitting. Managing tenant communication and ensuring minimal disruption were highlighted as essential components of any retrofitting strategy to avoid forcing residents out due to increased costs or lessened accessibility.



### 4. Policy and Program Inefficiencies

Several participants pointed out inefficiencies within existing policies and programs. There was a prevailing sentiment that current governmental frameworks do not adequately support retrofitting initiatives. Confusing rebate structures and a lack of clear guidelines for accessing funding hinder stakeholder participation. The discussions called for a streamlined and transparent approach to policy development that reflects the actual needs of communities while promoting sustainability.



## Potential Solutions Discussed:

### 1. Financial Solutions

- **Government Investment:** Attendees emphasized the necessity of increased government funding to support both upfront costs and long-term financial modelling to enhance financing options.
- **Financing Matrix:** The creation of a comprehensive financing matrix to aggregate funding options was proposed, which would provide stakeholders with easy access to financial resources needed for retrofitting projects.
- **Building Labeling and Case Studies:** Advocating for building labelling and sharing case studies of successful projects can help demonstrate long-term payback, motivating investors and property owners to engage in retrofitting.

### 2. Capacity Building

- **Workforce Training Programs:** Participants articulated the need for targeted workforce training to build skills relevant to deep retrofits. This included promoting heat pump maintenance, contractor training, and micro-credentialing programs in post-secondary education.
- **Mapping Existing Resources:** Mapping current workforce capacity and contractor capabilities can help identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration among service providers.

### 3. Managing Disruption

- **Clear Communication:** Improving communication strategies will help manage tenant expectations before, during, and after the retrofitting process. Providing advance notice and coordinating closely with tenants can mitigate concerns about disruptions.
- **Affordability Criteria:** Integrating affordability considerations and tenant protection into financing and policy frameworks ensures that vulnerable populations are not disproportionately affected during retrofitting efforts.

### 4. Policy Improvements

- **Collaborative Approaches:** Establishing collaboration opportunities between governments, industry leaders, and community organizations was deemed critical to shaping effective retrofitting policies.
- **Revised Metrics for Success:** Participants suggested developing new metrics for success beyond just financial returns, integrating social equity and environmental impact into the evaluation process.



## Conclusions:

The roundtables concluded that while significant challenges exist in implementing deep retrofits across Atlantic Canada, there are actionable solutions that can mitigate these barriers.

## COLLABORATION

Collaboration among stakeholders, improved financial models, and workforce capacity expansion present promising pathways to achieving a more sustainable built environment.

## EDUCATION

Emphasizing the importance of storytelling and sharing case studies of successful projects can catalyze broader community engagement and inspire action.

## INCLUSIVE

By addressing tenant concerns and implementing policies that focus on equity and accessibility, stakeholders can ensure that the transition to greener buildings is inclusive and beneficial for all.

## COMMUNICATION

Going forward, it is essential that stakeholders commit to fostering partnerships, sharing resources, and developing innovative financing mechanisms to create a vibrant retrofit ecosystem capable of addressing the urgent challenges posed by climate change and urbanization in Atlantic Canada.