

2024 Commercial Roundtable Report: Charlottetown

On October 18, 2024, ReCover, in partnership with Building To Zero Exchange met with building owners, policy makers, and building/property managers in New Brunswick. As a result of this session, we captured the insights and ideas that emerged from a dynamic discussion among industry leaders, policy experts, and community partners working to accelerate deep retrofits in Atlantic Canada.

Analysis:

The discussion surrounding commercial retrofits at the ReCover Roundtable in Charlottetown highlighted several essential themes and challenges that stakeholders face in pursuing more sustainable building practices.



Challenges

- 1. Understanding Goals and Pathways:** A significant barrier is the lack of clarity regarding the specific goals and methodologies for achieving successful commercial retrofits. Participants emphasized the need for clearly defined targets to guide the retrofit process and enable stakeholders to align their efforts effectively.
- 2. Industry Support:** There appears to be a gap in the support from the industry, which is crucial for driving the adoption of retrofit practices. This includes the need for enhanced collaboration among various sectors to develop solutions that are not only effective but also economically feasible.
- 3. Skilled Labor and Training:** The shortage of skilled labor poses a considerable challenge. As retrofitting often requires specialized knowledge—particularly regarding energy efficiency and sustainable practices—training opportunities and educational initiatives are essential for equipping the workforce.
- 4. Balancing Conflicting Priorities:** Stakeholders expressed concerns about the competing priorities between affordable housing and net-zero (NZ) goals. This struggle emphasizes the need for integrated strategies that can address both affordability and sustainability in the commercial building sector.
- 5. Public Education and Coordination:** There is a pressing need for better public education regarding retrofit options and their benefits. With a more informed public, demand for retrofitting services could increase, driving momentum for change.

Solutions

- 1. Financial Incentives:** Various financial tools were discussed, such as federal incentives for better mortgage rates and tax credits like those enacted in Italy's 110% Superbonus program. These incentives can significantly lower the financial barriers for businesses looking to invest in retrofits.
- 2. Policy Alignment and Coordination:** Establishing clearer pathways for policy alignment between provincial and municipal levels was highlighted. A coordinated approach can ensure that all stakeholders are working toward common goals, facilitating smoother implementation of retrofit projects.
- 3. Knowledge Capacity Building:** Building knowledge in the community through initiatives like the PEI Clean Tech Academy emerged as a critical need. Case studies showcasing successful retrofit projects can inspire and inform others about the potential benefits and methods of retrofitting existing commercial buildings.
- 4. Training Programs:** The roundtable touched on the importance of structured training programs for contractors, with micro-credentialing being a potential strategy to enhance skills in the workforce. Educational institutions, such as Holland College, can play a vital role in developing and delivering training specific to sustainable design and retrofitting techniques.

Conclusion:

The discussion at the Charlottetown roundtable illuminated the multifaceted nature of commercial retrofits, encompassing economic, educational, and policy-driven factors. Addressing the identified challenges through the proposed solutions could pave the way for increased adoption of retrofitting practices, ultimately leading to more sustainable commercial spaces in the region.

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