

2024 Commercial Roundtable Report: Moncton

On October 22, 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.

Challenges

- Workforce capacity
- Buy-in from decision-makers
- Heritage properties
- The coordination and alignment of federal and provincial incentives. Are they stackable?
- Energy advisors
- Data availability
- Retrofits can't be seen, unlike the visibility of solar panels that allow owners to signal their commitment.
- Communication and education and awareness building
- The misalignment of business models with climate goals
- How to turn good ideas and intentions/goals into real projects that are realized
- Savings from retrofits are lost due to higher property tax as the value of the asset increases
- It's easier to receive funding for new builds vs. retrofits
- Communities are having to fund increasing infrastructure costs

Solutions

Workforce & Capacity

- Skills training that leads to jobs
- Experiential learning
- Community collaboration
- The Code Acceleration Fund
 - Residential and commercial
 - Training opportunities
 - Partnership opportunities

Cost/Budget

- Time now to re-think the financial systems to create flexibility to make the business case
- Need Less disruptive retrofit methods
- Need upfront funds
- Need to keep tenants in buildings to maintain cash flow
- Flow the money back from property tax to fund retrofits – population increase should allow us to capture the value and reinvest
- Financial and insurance industries – what are the motivational factors?
- Policy & Regulation
- Improved building code
- Retrofit building code
- Need alignment between federal, provincial and municipal governments



Analysis:

The discussion at the ReCover Roundtable in Moncton regarding commercial retrofits illuminated several critical challenges and potential solutions facing stakeholders in the field.

Challenges Identified:

1. Workforce Capacity

A primary concern is the workforce's capacity, specifically the skills gap in the industry. Comprehensive training is essential, as policies alone cannot drive retrofits without a trained workforce.

2. Retrofitting heritage properties

Regulatory obstacles can stifle innovation

3. Property Taxes

Post-retrofit property tax increases can diminish savings, creating barriers to investment

A primary concern is the workforce's capacity, specifically the skills gap in the industry. Comprehensive training is essential, as policies alone cannot drive retrofits without a trained workforce. Effective advocacy and communication are crucial to highlight the importance of retrofitting for energy efficiency and economic benefits.

The discussion noted challenges in retrofitting heritage properties, including regulatory obstacles that stifle innovation, and raised concerns about the coordination of federal and provincial incentives for commercial property owners. Moreover, retrofits' visibility compared to solar panels poses a challenge, as retrofit benefits are often hidden, making it harder to attract investment. Lastly, post-retrofit property tax increases can diminish savings, creating barriers to investment, unlike the more straightforward funding for new constructions.

Potential Solutions Discussed:

- ✓ Proposed a multifaceted approach that includes workforce development through skills training and experiential learning to create a capable labour pool.
- ✓ Financial flexibility was emphasized, with suggestions to rethink current systems, develop less disruptive retrofit methods, and explore innovative financing models, such as reinvesting additional property tax revenue into retrofit funding.
- ✓ Enhancing policy and regulatory frameworks was deemed essential, including improved building codes and stronger alignment among federal, provincial, and municipal governments to streamline retrofitting processes.

Conclusion:

The roundtable fostered productive dialogue on modernizing commercial properties by addressing workforce capacity, policy alignment, and creative financial solutions. It highlighted a collective readiness to innovate and collaborate for energy efficiency improvements in the sector.

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