



Government moves to 'greener' building code requirements

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Starting Sept. 5, ultra-low-flow toilets and other water-saving plumbing fixtures will be mandatory in all new construction in B.C. and there will be new insulation requirements under the B.C. Building Code.

The ability to reduce off-street parking requirements for developers is also part of changes in store for the province as legislation was introduced yesterday, aimed to help B.C. communities reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and encourage "greener," more compact, development

The new insulation requirements will be for multi-family residential buildings under five storeys and small commercial and industrial buildings.

"Greening the B.C. Building Code will reduce the environmental footprint of buildings and will lower energy bills for British Columbians," Rich Coleman, the minister responsible for housing, said in a release.

The Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act will allow municipalities to steer development through such things as more flexible off-street parking requirements and the ability in some cases to waive development cost charges.

The act will also require greenhouse gas emissions targets to be included in official community plans and regional growth strategies across B.C.

"We will be helping them to determine baselines of where they are now," said Community Services Minister Ida Chong. "They should also let us know what their [emissions] targets will be and the plans and actions they intend to take to ensure that takes place."

The legislation provides tools to help reach those targets. One of the main ones is a new ability to reduce off-street parking requirements for developers who are including green elements in their projects.

All municipalities now have by-laws that require off-street parking to be created for any new development. The space-to-unit ratio varies between municipalities.

Under this legislation, municipalities will be able to either waive the off-street

parking requirements or collect cash-in-lieu from the developer which can be used to subsidize alternatives such as pedestrian walkways, cycling paths or public transportation. Until now, such cash-in-lieu had to be used solely to create off-street parking.

The legislation also allows municipalities to waive or reduce development cost charges.

Developers building housing units of 29 square metres or less will be exempted from paying development cost charges. Municipalities will also be able to waive or reduce those charges for developers building for-profit affordable rental housing, small-lot subdivisions or projects with low environmental impact.

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