

December 12, 2022

Hon. David Eby, Premier

Hon. Josie Osborne, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

Hon. George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Hon. Bowinn Ma, Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

Hon. Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing

Hon. Adrian Dix, Minister of Health

Re: Ban Gas Hook-Ups from New Buildings

We, the undersigned 100 organizations, are writing to urge the BC government to demonstrate its commitment to climate emergency action, human health and wellbeing, and urgent emissions cuts by declaring that, **by the end of 2023, new buildings – residential, commercial and industrial – will be prohibited from connecting to gas lines.**¹

Pollution from buildings – mainly derived from the burning of “natural” gas for space heating, hot water and cooking – represents about 10% of BC’s greenhouse gas emissions. While the province has been making efforts to get buildings and home-owners to switch from gas to electric heating (for example, offering rebates for electric heat pumps), each new building that connects to gas as its main source of heating represents a step backwards. We cannot move forward on the urgent task of transitioning to a zero-carbon economy if new buildings continue to make the situation worse. Yet in each of the past few years, FortisBC has increased its customer base by over 10,000, making a mockery of the province’s CleanBC’s commitments.

Various municipal governments have sought to act on this file. But it is unrealistic to expect all of BC’s cities and towns to act on this independently with the urgency required. This approach is also confusing and unduly complicated for builders and developers, creating a patchwork of different standards across the province. Meanwhile, FortisBC has shown itself to be relentless in its promotion of new gas tie-ins and new gas-burning appliances.

There is also growing evidence that both fracking and combusting gas inside our homes is harmful to human health and is linked to childhood asthma. The [American Medical Association recently passed a resolution](#) declaring the indoor air pollution caused by gas stoves to be a health threat. Moreover, as global warming and extreme heat events increase, there is an urgent need to protect lives and public safety by requiring cooling systems within buildings. Electric heat pumps can provide this cooling, unlike gas furnaces.

Given this, it is essential that the provincial government take action with respect to new buildings – and send a strong signal that it understands the climate emergency – by making it the law of the land that new buildings cannot use gas or other fossil fuels.

¹ The deadline for colder regions of the province, where the markets and labour training for heat pumps and geothermal may be less developed, and a few select industries, can be modestly extended.

The answer is not to be found in FortisBC's dubious claims regarding "renewable gas;" even if FortisBC was able to secure vast quantities of truly carbon-neutral gas, it would still be best used for other purposes than buildings.² The best way to ensure zero emissions is to require new construction be all-electric, or to connect to neighbourhood/district geothermal energy systems.

We also urge your government to implement measures such as revenue sharing with First Nations impacted by BC Hydro's footprint; and a lower electric utility rate for all-electric buildings and capital grants for non-profit buildings to ensure that new housing is more affordable for BC's most vulnerable residents during the transition to a more sustainable future.

Other jurisdictions are taking bold action to reduce climate pollution from new buildings, while BC is falling behind. Without this measure, we lack confidence that the province will successfully meet its CleanBC target for BC buildings and communities to reduce total GHG emissions 59%-64% below 2007 levels by 2030. We note that the province's most recent climate change accountability report projects that BC will miss its 2030 target for buildings and communities by at least 35 per cent. The provincial government's current goal of making new buildings zero-carbon by 2030 is far too late.

Signed,

Brightside Community Homes Foundation
Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment - BC
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment - BC
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - BC
Climate Caucus
Climate Emergency Unit
David Suzuki Foundation
Dogwood
Ecotrust Canada
Force of Nature Alliance
Lanefab Design/Build
My Sea to Sky
Passive House Canada
Perkins & Will Architects
Public Service Alliance of Canada - BC
Stand.earth
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
VREC Solar
Wilderness Committee

² RNG or renewable gas often comes from fossil fuel or forest-based feedstocks and still has much higher carbon emissions than electricity. Truly carbon-neutral RNG is incredibly rare and should be reserved for its highest and best use in sectors that are difficult to decarbonize, such as heavy industry. RNG also poses the same health risks to indoor air quality as conventional gas.

1st Knowledge Bank Ltd.
350 Vancouver
Affine Climate Solutions
Alberni Climate Action
AMS Roots on the Roof
BC Hydro Ratepayers Association
Burnaby For Our Kids
Canadian Health Assoc. for Sustainability and Equity
Chase Environmental Action Group
Chemainus Climate Solutions
Citizens Climate Lobby - East Kootenay
Clayoquot Action
Climate Action Now! in the North Okanagan
Climate Justice Victoria
Coastal Current Adventures Ltd.
Council of Canadians - Campbell River
Council of Canadians - Mid-Island Nanaimo
Council of Canadians - Terrace
Cowichan Carbon Busters
Cowichan Climate Hub
Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society
Creatively United for the Planet Society
Creston Climate Action Society
Dawson Psychological Services
Denman Island Climate Action Network
Denman Islanders for Climate Action & Social Justice
Doctors and Nurses for Planetary Health - Kootenay
Doctors for Planetary Health - West Coast
EK Climate Hub
Extinction Rebellion Victoria BC
First Things First Okanagan
For Our Kids - North Shore
For Our Kids - Burnaby
For Our Kids - Vancouver
Force of Nature Alliance - North Shore
Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty - BC
Fraser Valley Climate Action
Friends of Tilbury
Fulcrum Projects Ltd.
General Delivery Data Corporation
GNAR Inc - Sustainable Home Design
Happy Valley Farm
Harmonic Arts
IJV
Impact Arts Society
Kelowna Chapter Zebras Unite
Leda Farm
Lifecycles
Mayne Island Brewing Company
Mount Work Coalition
Nanaimo Climate Action Hub
Nanaimo Unitarian Environmental Committee
Nature Nanaimo
Nurses and Doctors for Planetary Health - Victoria
Ocean Friendly Port Alberni
One Cowichan Education Society
OPBC
Parents 4 Climate
Paxar Technologies Corp
PenderPlanter
Preney and Associates
qathet Climate Alliance
Saanich Eco Advocates
Shake Up The Establishment
Small Planet Supply
Social Environmental Alliance
Socialist Action
Socially Responsible Investing Cowichan
Stop Fracking Around
Sunshine Coast Climate Action Network
Surrey for Future
Sustainable Environment Network Society
The Coastal Village
Thuja Wood Art
Transition Kamloops
Transition Sooke
Vancouver Unitarians Environment Team
Victoria Climate Action Team
View Royal Climate Coalition
West Kootenay Climate Hub
Yellow Point Ecological Society