



As New Building Climate Regulations Loom, Savvy B.C. Property Owners and Managers Are Gaining a Competitive Edge

Building Benchmark BC is helping the province's building owners and managers understand where they stand on energy and carbon, so they can strategically plan upgrades

March 9, 2021 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — British Columbia real estate owners and managers are gaining the upper hand on their competition by voluntarily disclosing their buildings' energy and greenhouse gas emission data in a building energy and emissions benchmarking program.

The first Building Benchmark BC Annual Report, available at buildingbenchmarkbc.ca, offers insights from energy and emissions data on hundreds of properties submitted by dozens of owners according to building type, use, and location.

Participating building owners and managers are gaining a deeper understanding of their energy use while getting out front of upcoming carbon requirements. The City of Vancouver, a Building Benchmark BC participating jurisdiction, has already committed to require annual energy reporting starting in 2023 and regulate emissions from existing large commercial buildings starting in 2025.

"It's an open secret that the policy landscape is changing, and we're convinced that benchmarking gives us a competitive edge, to make sure we stay on top and out front," said Oskar Kwieton, Director of Facilities, Operations & Maintenance, for Shape Management, a Building Benchmark BC participant.

Building benchmarking is the process of collecting and monitoring energy and greenhouse gas data from a large number of buildings over time, allowing owners, managers, occupants, and governments to compare the performance of similar properties. It helps governments and building owners direct resources into the best interventions, in the right buildings, to achieve the highest climate benefit.

Building Benchmark BC is running on a software platform called GRID, developed by OPEN Technologies, a Vancouver-based building energy-efficiency software company. The software helps program managers aggregate, clean, and analyze building performance data from the hundreds of thousands of buildings that use Natural Resources Canada's ENERGY STAR™Portfolio Manager.

In 2019, Natural Resources Canada provided funding to OPEN Technologies to develop GRID as a tool that jurisdictions can use to run rigorous and consistent benchmarking programs. It represents the next step in that federal department's work to maximize the potential of ENERGY STAR™Portfolio Manager.



“Improvements in energy efficiency will get us a third of the way to our Paris targets. Improved data, energy reporting and benchmarking programs helps us build a low-emissions energy future. This is how we get to net-zero by 2050,” said the Honourable Seamus O’Regan, Canada’s Minister of Natural Resources.

The Building Benchmark BC pilot is demonstrating the strong potential of GRID, and ENERGY STAR™Portfolio Manager, to advance energy and emissions reporting and disclosure across Canada.

“This first year far exceeded our expectations,” said Donovan Woollard, the CEO of OPEN Technologies. “Building owners and operators who collectively oversee five million square metres of space have recognized the value of voluntarily measuring and disclosing their properties’ energy use and emissions.”

“We’re seeing a clear relationship between effective policy and sound, comprehensive, data,” Woollard added. “Building Benchmark BC is laying the data foundation for what we expect will be a series of aggressive climate initiatives to come.”

Building Benchmark BC is now welcoming participation from additional owners or/or managers of commercial real estate in British Columbia. Those interested in signing up may do so via buildingbenchmarkBC.ca.

To interact with the Building Benchmark BC database and assess how hundreds of buildings perform on various energy and carbon metrics, visit the disclosure site at buildingbenchmarkbc.ca/data.

Attached Backgrounders:

- Inside the Building Benchmark BC Annual Report
- Perspectives from Year One Participants

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Building Benchmark BC is a pilot initiative of local governments convened by the OPEN Green Building Society, made possible with support from Natural Resources Canada, Real Estate Foundation of BC, and BC Hydro.

Media Contact:

James Glave
Mobile: 604-833-4368
james@glave.com



Backgrounder: Inside the First Building Benchmark BC Annual Report

Here are some highlights from the first year of the program, excerpted from the Annual Report:

- Building Benchmark BC launched on January 21, 2020 with project funding from Natural Resources Canada, as a pilot initiative of local governments convened by the OPEN Green Building Society.
- For this, our first report, building owners and managers pledged to submit building performance data on 765 individual properties. As a result of pandemic-related delays and reprioritization, we ultimately received data for 534 properties, or 70 per cent of pledged buildings.
- Collectively, the submitted properties to date represent 5.0 million square metres of conditioned floor space, which is the equivalent space occupied by 928 regulation Canadian Football League fields.
- We started out with six jurisdiction partners on board (four municipalities plus Metro Vancouver and the University of British Columbia); by the end of the year we had 12.
- As of the end of the program's first year, the following jurisdictions were collecting building performance data via Building Benchmark BC:
 - The City of Burnaby
 - The City of Kelowna
 - The City of Surrey
 - The City of Richmond
 - The City of North Vancouver
 - The Township of Langley
 - The City of Victoria
 - The City of New Westminster
 - The City of Vancouver
 - The University of British Columbia
 - The City of North Vancouver
 - The District of Saanich
 - Metro Vancouver
- Building Benchmark BC is now welcoming new property owners and managers—as well as additional jurisdictions—to join for our next reporting cycle.



Backgrounder: Perspectives from Year One Participants

A selection of observations and insights from partners, participants, and local government leaders:

“As we work to improve energy efficiency and decarbonize our civic facilities, Building Benchmark BC is giving the City of North Vancouver a unique opportunity to evaluate and compare the performance of our civic buildings with similar building types across our region. Benchmarking is critical for assessing baseline performance and measuring our progress as we work towards becoming a more sustainable and liveable community.”

—**Linda Buchanan**, Mayor, City of North Vancouver

“The City of Richmond has long been a leader in energy benchmarking and is a strong advocate for building energy benchmarking as a tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As a proud municipal participant in Building Benchmark BC, we encourage building owners and property managers of larger residential, commercial and industrial buildings to register with the program in order to help build on the momentum that’s already underway, and to receive the benefits the program offers.”

—**Malcolm Brodie**, Mayor, City of Richmond

“The City of Burnaby was proud to be among the first municipalities to join the Building Benchmark BC program, along with the owners of 19 private sector buildings in Burnaby. Achieving our climate goals will require a community-wide effort, and we applaud the private sector participants who have signed on. We encourage even more participants to join the next cycle.”

—**Mike Hurley**, Mayor, City of Burnaby

“Building benchmarking gives our teams critical insights into energy and carbon of our space and water heating, cooling, and ventilation systems, and it’s helping inform strategic recommendations on capital plans. Ignoring GHG emissions won’t make them go away; it’s an open secret that the policy landscape is changing, and we’re convinced that benchmarking gives us a competitive edge, to make sure we stay on top and out front.”

—**Oskar Kwieton**, Director of Facilities, Operations & Maintenance, Shape Management

“The BC Nonprofit Housing Association has been encouraging energy benchmarking in multi-unit residential buildings to gain a more accurate understanding of energy use across our sector.. Benchmarking not only helps non-profit housing societies better understand their buildings and see the benefits of energy-efficient retrofits, but also helps support the needs of the sector as whole.”

—**Rachelle Grohs**, Asset Management Coordinator, BC Nonprofit Housing Association