

## MEDIA RELEASE

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## A new way to fund retrofits. Ontario and Nova Scotia show the way says report from Columbia Institute

**VANCOUVER, B.C., March 17, 2016** – A [new report](#) from Columbia Institute finds that Ontario and Nova Scotia are leading the provincial pack in a new way to fund home retrofits. Minor legislative changes in both provinces have opened the door for local governments to launch innovative retrofit programs. Scaling up retrofits has a host of co-benefits: lower residential energy bills, increased home value, more comfortable, healthier homes and job creation. It's the fastest way to reduce emissions.

"The timing couldn't be better for such innovation. Research shows that, at current global emission rates, the entire carbon budget for a 50 percent chance of keeping global warming at 1.5 degrees will be exhausted by 2025," says **Charley Beresford**, Executive Director of the Columbia Institute. "Canada was an early adopter of pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase in Paris at the climate discussions in December. Clarifying legislation for local government retrofit leadership offers a spring board for climate action."

By amending local improvement charge (LIC) legislation, provincial governments in Ontario and Nova Scotia have opened the door for local governments to implement home retrofit programs. This allows home owners to pay for their retrofits from energy savings through their property taxes.

Since the legislative changes, Toronto has established the Home Energy Loan Program (HELP). 18 other Ontario local governments are now exploring retrofit programs. Guelph passed legislation in the fall 2015 to pave the way for the "Guelph Energy Efficiency Retrofit Strategy."

In Nova Scotia, Halifax has used LIC financing for retrofits successfully and at least four other communities in Nova Scotia, including Bridgewater, Shelburne, Berwick and Guysborough have begun passing similar by-laws and setting up programs.

A similar program in Nelson, B.C. uses on bill financing through the locally owned electricity utility. Energy use has been reduced by 35%, taking the equivalent of 1,430 cars off the road.

**Why does this matter?** As much as 30 percent of a given communities greenhouse gas emissions can come from energy use in buildings. Widespread investments in the residential sector could mean slicing off as much as 4 percent of Canada's emissions from energy use.

The approach offers an innovative way to scale up retrofits and climate action, especially if federal and provincial energy efficiency grant programs are re-instated. Local governments have jurisdiction over construction and renovations and bring community know how, initiative and local leadership.

LIC financing offers a proven and secure mechanism for financing improvements and ensuring repayment.

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### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

“This Green House II” follows up on the Columbia Institute’s initial report on residential energy retrofit financing in 2011. The full report is available online [here](#).

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### **QUOTES:**

**Mike Layton, Toronto City Councillor:** "Building energy retrofits not only help reduce greenhouse gases, they create local jobs in the process. I helped develop Toronto's Home energy loan program because the Federal and Provincial governments were failing to take on Climate Change and we needed cities to step up. Local government leadership makes a difference. "

**Councillor CaroleAnn Leishman, City of Powell River:** "To be able to use Local Improvement Charges (LICs) to assist homeowners to upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes and add renewable energy solutions is a no-brainer. Why wouldn't local governments want to do that when you look at the results of pilot projects that have been done? It just makes total sense. This would be a good step forward for the province."

### **ABOUT THE COLUMBIA INSTITUTE:**

The Columbia Institute is a Vancouver-based, Canada-focused public policy think-tank with a mission to foster and support inclusive, sustainable communities. This work is rooted in our belief that communities who value social justice, the environment and local economy are healthier, happier places to live. Our programs focus on civic governance, leadership initiatives, responsible investment, and capacity building. Registered in 2000, the Columbia Institute is a national charitable organization. <http://www.columbiainstitute.ca/> @CBColumbia