A stronger and more resilient Canada is possible, according to core real estate, clean tech and construction industry leaders.
CaGBC, its foundational partners and allies respond to the Speech from the Throne and welcome the vision it lays out for a Canada built on the foundation of equality, resilience, and sustainability.

Earlier this year, while the government rightly focused on supporting Canadians through the pandemic, CaGBC and its members were looking ahead to how the government might leverage stimulus spending to revive the economy and address climate change.

In *Ready, Set, Grow*, CaGBC outlined its recommendations for using green building to kick-start the economy and create new jobs, and reach Canada’s 2030 carbon emission targets. We identified three key areas where government investment could have the most impact: Low-carbon workforce development, retrofits of existing buildings, and zero carbon new construction.

While the Speech was light on details, the broad strokes give us reason to hope our message was well received.

**Workforce Development**
The Liberals’ promise of one million jobs and the “largest investment in worker training in Canada’s history” could underpin Canada’s transition to a low carbon economy.

Job growth could be accomplished through investment in building retrofits. However, it would require the up-skilling of the existing workforce, including building trades and professionals such as engineers, architects, and renewable energy specialists. The workforce would also need to expand, providing a channel to greater inclusion, with a focus on women, youth, people with disabilities and racialized Canadians.

CaGBC research shows that investment in green building and progressive policies can result in impressive growth that could help the government meet its one million job goal. Canada’s green building industry currently employs over 460,000 people (more than forestry and oil and gas combined) and contributes approximately $48 billion towards the GDP. Under a scenario that includes investment in green building and progressive policies, by 2030, those numbers can reach 1.5 million jobs and $150 billion.
Building Retrofits
The Speech also called for investments in energy-efficient building renovations, creating thousands of jobs while reducing energy bills for Canadian families and businesses.

Our research shows that new green building construction alone will not deliver Canada’s 2030 GHG emission reduction target. Canada must reduce the emissions of its millions of square feet of existing institutional, commercial, and residential space to reach that goal.

In Ready, Set, Grow, CaGBC detailed how investment in high-efficiency, low-carbon retrofits could result in massive reductions in carbon emissions while quickly getting Canadians back to work.

Zero Carbon New Construction
The Liberals’ indicated they would immediately put in place a plan to surpass Canada’s climate targets for 2030 and legislate on Canada’s goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. To achieve this ambitious goal, the government will have to look to the building sector. Buildings account for almost 30 per cent of Canada’s carbon emissions when materials, construction, and operations are considered together.

Zero carbon buildings offer both economic and environmental benefits and are technically feasible to design, construct and operate. However, despite a positive financial return over a 25-year life-cycle, there is still a capital cost premium of approximately eight per cent for large buildings, limiting widespread adoption. Our recommendations call for the government to take a leadership role by ensuring all federally funded, owned, or leased buildings move toward zero carbon.

CaGBC and its partners support the government’s plan to attract investment in zero-emission manufacturing with a new fund and tax incentives to ensure these companies create jobs and make Canada a world leader in clean technology. Relying on clean technology companies for innovative building solutions like heat pumps, low-carbon materials, and smart technologies will help ramp up zero carbon new buildings as well as energy-efficient retrofits.

A path to the future
In our green recovery recommendations, CaGBC shared our aspirations that this unprecedented investment could become the tipping point needed to transition Canada toward a resilient, low-carbon economy, and a sustainable future. The impact of COVID-19 and the proposed government stimulus is such that there is an opportunity to “re-engineer” Canada in a direction of our choosing.
CaGBC and our partners in a green recovery await clarity from the government on how this vision will be realized. In the meantime, we will continue to demonstrate the benefits of green buildings on Canada’s economic recovery and the impact they will have on health, resiliency, the environment and equality.

Foundational partners and allies in a green recovery: