

# ENABLE RNG IN ZERO CARBON STEP CODE



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On May 1, the Ministry of Housing is enabling municipalities to adopt a Zero Carbon Step Code, reducing carbon (GHG's) from new homes.

The levels are:

**Moderate:** Fossil fuel water heating and cooking allowed. Space heating must be zero carbon.

**Strong:** Fossil fuel cooking allowed. Space and water heating systems must be zero carbon.

**Zero:** No fossil fuels allowed. Space and water heating and cooking must be zero carbon.

Zero carbon will be mandatory in BC in 2030.

Left off the list of accepted energy sources is Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) obtained from the Hartland Landfill project, partly funded by local taxpayers. However, the province says RNG may be included by individual municipalities.

According to the CRD, "RNG is a carbon-neutral energy made from capturing and upgrading the biogas released from decomposing organic waste in the landfill." Instead of the biogas released into the atmosphere, it can be used to heat homes.

RNG should be recognized as a "carbon-neutral energy" source in the Zero Carbon Step Code. This will support the Hartland Landfill project and help diversify our energy in the interests of affordability and energy security.

However, some municipalities are requiring extremely high levels of energy efficient construction if RNG is used. This adds tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of a home – costs already boosted by

higher interest rates.

There should be no municipally-mandated levels of construction, beyond the provincial building code, also accompanied by education for builder licensing.

Municipalities may create unintended consequences, such as toxic radon exposure, linked to lung cancer and leukemia. Studies show radon increased in homes built from 2012 to 2021 compared with those built in 2001 to 2010, after which energy efficiency was increased in the building code.

Reasons for more radon include house depressurization and gaps from concrete slab shrinkage.

A National Building Code Task Group recently found radon maps lack sufficient detail to determine radon levels, which can only be reliably tested after the home is built. Therefore, it appears radon mitigation rough-ins are necessary across Canada.

The BC government made the mistake of launching their construction Step Code in 2017, prior to this important research by Codes Canada. Some local municipalities bypassed steps and fast-tracked energy efficiency as they are now doing with the Zero Carbon Step Code.

Municipalities do not possess the expertise nor resources to do the necessary research for health and safety in buildings. VRBA recommends following the National Building Code and BC's provincial timeline of 2030 for mandatory decarbonization and 2032 for Net Zero housing.



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