

Canadian
Wood
Council

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Important Development on the Use of Wood in Mid-Rise Construction

Wood *WORKS!* BC has been actively working on implementing wood into mid-rise construction for the 18 months. Efforts to change the building code in order to allow wood use in mid-rise (greater than 4 story) construction is now being fast-tracked, due to meetings between BC Wood *WORKS!* and provincial government agencies , and has been aided by ongoing intervention by industry partners.

Earlier this summer the BC provincial government announced it will be implementing changes to the BC Building Code. Although it is unorthodox for a provincial government to initiate a change to the building code, the government is unwavering in its decision. To that end, Wood *WORKS!* representatives recently met with representatives from AIBC (Architects Institute of BC) and APEG (Association of Professional Engineers), and with the manager of the Building and Safety Policy Branch of BC in order to discuss and address modifying the BC Building Code in order to permit buildings up to 6 stories in wood construction. The Policy Branch is required to provide background advice to the government, and therefore the groups in attendance prepared a joint submission to the provincial government in response to the BC Ministry of Building and Safety Policy Scoping Paper.

Mary Tracey, Wood *WORKS!* BC Executive Director, noted it is imperative to ensure that due diligence is carried out in order to ensure that the code is changed in such a way that the potential for wood use in mid rise construction is maximized, in order to fully benefit the wood industry.

Trudy Rotgans, Manager, Building and Safety Policy Branch (BC Chief Building Official) noted there is a great level of confidence that any technical and structural issues can be addressed through knowledge, peer review and education. To that end, the Canadian Wood Council's technical staff are now involved in the process, and has been asked to play a key role in advancing the BC building code changes.

For the past year Wood *WORKS!* has been researching building codes and practices from jurisdictions around the world and has brought experts in mid-rise construction to Canada to meet with leading Canadian designers. Wood *WORKS!* forums and technical seminars have accelerated the process and built awareness as to the huge potential for increased wood use.

Tracey noted the interest from the design and construction community has “been overwhelming”. She said Wood *WORKS!* is receiving several calls each week from builders and developers who wish to be involved. She is confident that as this initiative develops, there will be increased opportunity for involvement from the wood products industry.