

Federal Fall Economic Statement Supports Home Energy Retrofits

Yesterday, Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland tabled the Fall Economic Statement entitled *Supporting Canadians and Fighting COVID-19*, a spending plan that looks to support Canadians during the continued COVID-19 pandemic and support Canada's economic recovery. The plan includes several measures that will affect the HVAC sector, most notably a commitment to support home energy retrofits (as proposed by HRAI) though details remain to be communicated.

This is the second update the government has provided during the pandemic. The first one in July projected the federal deficit would hit a record of \$343.2 billion. The last time the government tabled a spending plan was back in March 2019 -- their last budget before the 2019 federal election.

The Fall Economic Statement today updated the deficit projection to \$381.6 billion. The largest announcements coming from the spending plan concern support for some of Canada's hardest hit industries, such as tourism and hospitality, support for long-term care homes, support to help women return to work and stimulus spending on infrastructure.

The statement will now need to go through the legislative process, with the goal of being passed and receiving royal assent prior to the holiday break.

Highlights

The following was included in the Fall Economic Statement as it relates to HRAI members:

- The government proposes to provide \$2.6 billion over 7 years, starting in 2020-21, to Natural Resources Canada to help homeowners improve their home energy efficiency by providing up to 700,000 grants of up to \$5,000 to help homeowners make energy-efficient improvements to their homes, up to one million free EnerGuide energy assessments, and support to recruit and train EnerGuide energy auditors to meet increased demand. Additional information on home energy efficiency grants will be provided in a future announcement, and eligibility for these grants will be retroactive to December 1, 2020.
- The government also recognizes that homeowners and landlords need to be able to access simple and affordable financing to make deeper home energy retrofits. Over the coming months the government will outline details of a low-cost loan program that integrates and builds on available energy audits and grants, and which can be easily accessed by Canadians.
- To further bolster training supports for those hardest hit by the pandemic, including marginalized and racialized women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and recent newcomers to Canada, the government proposes to invest an additional \$274.2 million over 2 years, starting in 2021-22. This funding will support the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program, the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, and the Women's Employment Readiness Canada pilot project.

- Building on investments made through the COVID-19 Resilience Stream under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program and the Safe Return to Class Fund, the government proposes to provide \$150 million over three years, starting in 2020-21, to Infrastructure Canada to improve ventilation in public buildings and help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This will help provincial, territorial, municipal and local governments and Indigenous communities fund projects that increase air quality and circulation, such as upgrades or conversions of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. More details on this measure will be announced in the coming months.

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