

Fall 2022 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the [application guide](#) to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at midnight on Sunday September 18, 2022.

Project title: Tenant's rights to energy efficient, climate resilient and healthy housing in British Columbia

Project Background & Overview:

This project will contribute to a body of research on energy insecurity (also called energy poverty) in Canada. Energy insecurity occurs when households struggle to pay for basic energy-related services like heating, cooling, lighting, cooking and communication. Energy insecurity can arise as a combination of lower incomes, energy-inefficient housing, and rising energy prices. Energy insecurity has a profound impact on human health and well-being. As the climate warms and extreme heat and air quality events become more frequent, these impacts are increasing.

This research will help tackle one of the most difficult problems in addressing energy insecurity: improving energy efficiency, comfort and safety standards for rental housing. Programs and policies to encourage home energy retrofits and lower energy bills are largely designed to reach homeowners. Renters, meanwhile, suffer from a split incentive where landlords have little incentive to improve efficiency or provide adequate heating and cooling when the tenant is paying the utility bill.

BC is looking to scale up home retrofits at a large scale in order to move its building sector away from fossil fuels and towards greater energy efficiency. Currently, households experiencing energy insecurity are among those least able to retrofit their homes, even though they are disproportionately impacted by high energy bills, extreme heat and cold, and health impacts resulting from unhealthy housing. Nowhere is this disparity more evident than in lower-income, renter households that currently have almost no agency over how energy is used in their home. This research aspires to begin changing this reality.

Project description

This research project will examine the policy and regulatory pathways available to improve the energy efficiency, comfort and safety of rental housing in British Columbia. The research will explore the increasing risks and severity of impacts on renters in energy inefficient and

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inadequately heated/cooled homes. These impacts can result from inefficient housing, energy insecurity, climate change, and its accompanying extreme weather events.

This research will include a scan of jurisdictions that have implemented minimum energy standards for rental suites, either through a regulatory trigger such as time of sale, time of rental, or as a requirement of rental licensing. The project will include gathering of best practices and synthesizing recommendations to policymakers, based on desktop research and interviews with program administrators in other jurisdictions.

The research should pay particular attention to the role of active cooling, e.g. with heat pumps, in support of a tenant's "right to cooling" during extreme weather events like the 2021 BC heat dome. It will also examine pathways to creating and enhancing minimum energy-related health and safety standards for rental housing, e.g., minimum and maximum temperatures, maximum energy costs, and air quality/ventilation requirements.

This research should consider regulatory and technical pathways that could be explored to improve rental housing in BC, but should also consider its recommendations through the lens of equity-based program design. This includes all four types of equity: procedural, distributional, structural and transgenerational.

Project scope

The scope of this project will include desktop research of existing policies and regulations in place to protect tenants in BC, as well as a survey of other jurisdictions that have implemented (or plan to implement) regulations specific to energy efficiency, energy consumption and cost, or minimum health and comfort standards for rental suites. It will, ideally, include interviews with program administrators in some of these jurisdictions in order to gather lessons learned and best practices.

These findings should be synthesized into a research report, along with recommendations for policymaker in BC. Recommendations will focus on pathways to making rental housing safer, more affordable and more climate-resilient while contributing towards BC's GHG reduction targets for homes and buildings. These will be developed in collaboration with Ecotrust Canada's energy and buildings policy experts.

The project should also include a presentation to accompany the final report, which can be used to showcase the research and help deliver it to policymakers and other audiences.

In addition, we would encourage the Scholar to present their research and findings at our planned Spring 2023 event for policymakers (see below), if they are available and interested.

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Deliverables

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).
- A final presentation summarizing the results and findings of the work

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete.
- This project must be completed between October 17, 2022 and March 15, 2023
- The scholars are generally to complete hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 10 to 12 hours per week. We are, however, flexible on working arrangements and hours, to best suit the Scholar's schedule.
- Meetings and check-ins will be performed remotely or by phone; there are no in-person meetings expected or anticipated (with the exception of the optional event described below).

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Excellent public speaking and presentation skills
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Demonstrated experience reviewing and analyzing policy

NOTE: If the Scholar is interested and available, we would welcome their participation in an event that we will be hosting in Mar/Apr 2023 in Vancouver or Victoria (after the project concludes). This event will bring together policymakers, NGOs and community leaders from across the province to chart a path toward ending energy insecurity in BC. As the Scholar's research will form a foundational piece of research supporting one of the main sessions of this event, we would welcome having the Scholar attend to present their findings.

Applications close **midnight Sunday September 18, 2022**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>