The Green Paper entitled *Forests: Building a Future for Québec*, published in February 2008, set out five major objectives to guide the reform of Québec’s forest regime. The first of these was to establish a true industrial development strategy for wood and a new appreciation of wood as a material. The Government proposed to introduce incentives as a means of increasing the use of wood as a material in Québec, among other things in the construction sector.

**The Wood Use Strategy for Construction: A First Step**

The Wood Use Strategy for Construction in Québec, published in May 2008, was the first major step taken by the Government to promote the use of wood in non-residential and multi-family construction.

The Strategy was organized around two main courses of action. The first of these stipulated that the Québec Government should lead by example, using wood in its own buildings. This course of action reflected the Government’s commitment to eco-responsible building practices, and meant that wood would be used wherever possible in Government construction projects. The second course of action involved promoting the use of wood in multi-family and non-residential construction in Québec, through innovation, the development of tools and the promotion of a new appreciation of wood in Québec, through the BOIS Québec Coalition.

**The Wood Charter**

When the Government published the Wood Charter in the spring of 2013, it took a significant step towards the goal of introducing some real, effective means to promote the use of wood in construction.
Increased use of wood in construction not only creates jobs and wealth for our forestry communities, but also plays a tangible role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Québec has earned world recognition for the quality and diversity of its forests, its exemplary management practices and its high quality, green forest products. The forest is a constant presence in Québec culture and identity. It is a source of pride, wealth, stimulating jobs and development in every region of Québec. Through its Wood Charter, the Québec Government will promote the development of advanced expertise that will help generate economic activity in many of the province’s regions and municipalities, as well as creating employment and enhancing public recognition of the importance of forestry trades and professions.

The Wood Charter’s main objectives are:
- to increase the use of wood in construction in Québec;
- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- to develop higher added-value wood products; and
- to enrich Québec as a whole.

The Charter’s Measures

1. GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

The Government, as Québec’s largest order-giver, must lead by example in the application of the Wood Charter. In other words, in every project financed wholly or partly by public funds, the project manager must systematically consider the use of wood prior to the project, and carry out a comparative analysis of greenhouse gas emissions for different materials. Renovation projects that add surface area to existing buildings will also be subject to the Charter’s provisions.

2. WOOD CONSTRUCTION

The document entitled Construction d’habitations en bois de 5 ou 6 étages – Directives et guide explicatif, published in July 2013 by the Régie du bâtiment du Québec, was produced jointly by the Régie and FPInnovations, and was one of the measures proposed in the Charter to reassert the value of wood as a material with obvious ecological qualities. Thanks to the Régie’s guidelines and the design guide written by FPInnovations, wood will be considered in future as a potential material for the construction of five- or six-storey buildings. In other words, the construction of five- or six-storey wood-framed buildings is now permitted, on certain conditions, without the need to apply to the Régie for equivalent measures. These conditions, presented in the form of guidelines in the first section of the document, list the elements that must be considered when constructing five- or six-storey wood-framed buildings. The guidelines will remain in force until the Construction Code has been permanently amended.

By allowing for the construction of taller buildings in wood, the Charter will also help to limit urban sprawl.

At the same time, the Charter promotes the use of wood in combination with other materials, and the use of decorative wood.

3. TRAINING AND PROMOTION

Educational institutions and centres of expertise will be asked to provide training on wood and its structural uses. They will also carry out promotion to ensure that professionals such as architects and engineers have access to the most recent information on the use of wood as a structural element.

4. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Through the Charter, the Québec Government will create conditions conducive to research and innovation. Among other things, it hopes to develop high value-added wood products, innovate in the use of wood for construction systems, and design green, energy-efficient buildings.

Ecological Advantages of Wood

Wood is without question the most ecological of all construction materials. It has the ability to capture and store the carbon atoms present in carbon dioxide, which is one of the greenhouse gases that causes climate change. On average, one cubic metre of wood will help to remove one tonne of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Large-scale use of wood will therefore benefit the population as a whole. In addition, wood can be recycled and reused, thereby prolonging carbon storage. Wood compares advantageously to other construction materials such as steel and concrete, which consume between 26% and 34% more energy and emit 57% to 81% more greenhouse gases. It is for this reason that the Charter promotes the use of wood for construction.

For further information on the Charter, please visit: mfn.gouv.qc.ca/forets/entreprises/entreprises-transformation.jsp

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