

About

- Purpose Building is a mission-driven, employee-owned company created in 2018 to accelerate real estate to planet-positive pathways, which includes delivering practical strategies for new and existing facilities to achieve “healthy, low-carbon buildings and communities ready for a circular economy”.
- Their clients are people who develop, build, own, manage and/or design real assets; market thought-leaders committed to triple bottom line solutions; and positive corporate citizens. Their clients choose to work with them because their “innovative solutions are aligned with how their [client’s] business works”.
- Services are offered in the areas of community planning and policy, portfolio programming, high performance building design, operations and renewal. To date, Purpose has worked with clients to create a new level of performance on over \$15B of real estate assets.



Industry Quick Facts

- Over 16 million dwellings and 482,000 commercial and public buildings are in use in Canada.*
- Canada’s *Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* states that “Canada’s ambitious targets for reductions in greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions must include a strategy for buildings, which today account for approximately 17% of all national GHG emissions and closer to 30% when construction and materials are considered. **
- Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) emphasizes the importance of decarbonizing Canada’s large buildings, the most significant challenge of which is for existing buildings by 2050. While new construction comprises almost 80% of all green building activity, existing buildings represent an important growth opportunity for the industry. “Canada has approximately 2.9 billion square metres of largely inefficient buildings and homes.**

Role & Responsibilities

- Researched principles of energy/carbon/material flows in buildings, human comfort, and business performance, in support of client engagements.
- Prepared content for internal and external reports and presentations which supported clients in zero carbon transition planning and green building certification program applications.
- Contributed to the development of new ideas, workflows, and tools, for the organization for professional knowledge sharing and training purposes (designed to gather and retain best practices, information, and the latest industry trends, to improve future project work).
- Pursued personal and professional development opportunities through continual learning to understand the systems needed for a healthy, circular, low-carbon economy.

Skills & Knowledge

- **Overall:** My internship showed me real-life applications of principles learned in my MScSM classes such as lifecycle assessments and the triple bottom line. I also experienced what some of the current barriers to sustainability principles are, e.g., industry status quo, cost allocation factors, etc.
- **Industry-Specific Knowledge:** I was familiar with the developer, municipal, and citizen perspective to building projects, but less so with other parties involved in their realization. This experience exemplified the value of technical knowledge regardless of which side of the discussions you are approaching from.
- **Consultancy Frameworks & Communication:** My internship gave me insights into consulting approaches, such as internal and external communication and relationships, planning and review processes, and client outcomes.
- **Problem-Solving Skills & Collaboration:** The culture of the organization fosters professional development through knowledge sharing, working on new project scopes and types, and learning how to distill problems to core issues for improved solutions.

Key Takeaways

- Sustainability related issues are complex and often there are no clear answers; the organization encouraged all employees to be comfortable with uncertainty and not to be defined by roles therefore allowing them to wear multiple hats which resulted in effective collective work towards positive client outcomes.
- Through the work of organizations such as Purpose, the real estate industry has been moving to incorporate sustainability from the economic and environmental lenses with increasing focus on integrating social aspects into the design and operation of building assets.
- Mission-driven and employee-owned organizations like Purpose have the ability to be selective in accepting work focusing only on those which align with their guiding principles even if this requires trading off financial returns for impact.
- Driving meaningful change in the real estate sector requires challenging the status quo which can take place with large scale change as well as incrementality tied to macro implications and a long-term vision.