

# **Executive Summary: Proposed Changes for the Next Edition of Ontario's Building Code**

## **Background: Supporting Harmonization**

The Government of Ontario is committed to increasing harmonization of the technical requirements in construction codes across Canada and streamlining the national and provincial code development process.

A Reconciliation Agreement was signed on August 27, 2020 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with responsibility for the Building Code and the Solicitor General with responsibility for the Fire Code.

Under the Agreement, Ontario (as well as all provinces and territories) is committed to:

- Reducing the number of technical differences (variations) between its Code and the National Codes.
- Releasing new (and increasingly harmonized) editions of its Code within specific timeframes following the release of new National Codes, including making the upcoming next edition of Ontario's Building Code in-effect 24 months after the release of the next National Codes.
- Transforming the national code development system.
- Having freely available National Construction Codes.

It is expected that the next edition of Ontario's Building Code will be in-effect at the end of 2023 pending the release of the 2020 National Construction Codes. This next edition is an important step in the process to support harmonization.

## **Consultation for the Next Edition of Ontario's Building Code**

As part of the development process for the next edition of Ontario's Building Code, the ministry is planning two rounds of public consultation:

- Fall 2021: Existing technical variations (including low-impact variations) between Ontario's Building Code and the National Construction Codes and some Ontario-specific changes
- Winter 2022: 2020 National Construction Code changes

The consultation approach for future editions of Ontario's Building Code will differ slightly from previous years as the ministry gradually works to increase harmonization and meet the other commitments made in the Reconciliation Agreement.

The Fall 2021 Consultation includes a Regulatory Registry notice, stakeholder engagement sessions and follow-up technical discussions on any complex changes that require further opportunity for feedback.

Similarly, the Winter 2022 Consultation will include a Regulatory Registry notice and stakeholder engagement sessions. If needed, further discussions may be planned.

## **Fall 2021 Consultation: Proposed Changes**

The proposed changes fall into the following categories:

- Existing Technical Variations
- Ontario-only Changes
- Low-Impact Existing Variations

### **What we mean by “Existing Technical Variations” and “Low-Impact Existing Variations”**

Existing technical variations and low-impact variations are current differences between Ontario’s Building Code and National Construction Codes. In this consultation, “Existing Technical Variations” refers to differences that may have a medium to high impact on the sector, whereas “Low-Impact Existing Variations” refers to minor differences between the Codes.

### **Existing Technical Variations**

These proposed changes would have a direct effect on current building designs, construction and enforcement.

The proposals related to Existing Technical Variations include aligning with National Construction Codes on the following major areas:

- Secondary suites in houses (e.g., defining secondary suites and establishing ceiling heights)
- Standpipe systems (e.g., adhering more closely with NFPA 14, “Installation of Standpipe and Hose Systems”)
- Fire sprinklers, fire alarm systems and carbon monoxide alarms (e.g., requiring sprinklers and fire alarm systems in more buildings and expanding the use of carbon monoxide alarms)
- Braced-wall panels (e.g., applying to a wider range of scenarios)
- Mezzanine designs (e.g., changing the design of mezzanines in large commercial buildings)
- Soil gas/Radon (e.g., adopting a proactive approach to address radon)
- Various plumbing requirements (e.g., removing certain provisions related to floor drains and separate services)

- House ventilation requirements (e.g., greater application of the use of cleaning devices to address contaminants)
- Guard design for balconies and stairways (e.g., allowing climbable elements in guards located up to 4.2 m from adjacent floor levels)

Eliminating these technical variations between Ontario’s Building Code and the current 2015 National Construction Codes would significantly contribute to increased harmonization.

The detailed list of approximately 700 Existing Technical Variations can be found in the document entitled “Proposed Building Code Changes: Existing Technical Variations and Ontario-only Changes”.

### **Ontario-only Changes**

The Fall 2021 consultation also contains a number of proposed changes to areas of the Building Code that are unique to Ontario. As such, these changes are not related to harmonization, but they would update existing requirements and respond to Coroner’s Inquest recommendations and other stakeholder requests.

The Ontario-only Changes included in the Fall 2021 consultation relate to:

- Referencing a new “signs standard” to facilitate use of current signs.
- Rapid transit stations to enable better platform design.
- Pre-manufactured homes: to facilitate use of current standards for the design and construction of pre-manufactured homes.
- Proposals developed in response to several Coroner’s Inquest recommendations: demountable stages, skylights, tents, carbon monoxide alarms, underpinning.

The detailed list of approximately 45 Ontario-only Changes can be found in the document entitled “Proposed Building Code Changes: Existing Technical Variations and Ontario-only Changes”.

The Ministry has received other Code change requests for Ontario-specific provisions that will be put forward for consultation in future.

### **Low-Impact Existing Variations**

These proposed changes are not expected to result in changes in policy and would have minimal impact on the building sector and current construction practices.

The types of changes to Low-Impact Existing Variations include:

- Removing some duplications and mirroring wording in the National Construction Codes (e.g., technical requirements already addressed in referenced standards such as the CSA and NFPA).
- Providing additional clarity (e.g., aligning terminology of electrical outlet boxes to all combustible outlet boxes).

There are approximately 150 Low-Impact Existing Variations. Eliminating these variations would further align Ontario's Building Code with the National Construction Codes.

The detailed list of these proposals can be found in the document entitled "Proposed Building Code Changes: Low-Impact Existing Variations".