



Accessibility in Ontario's Building Code

2014 JOIN Conference

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Ontario's Building Code

- The Building Code Act, 1992 governs the construction, renovation, demolition and change of use of buildings
- The Building Code is a regulation under the Act and sets out minimum technical and administrative requirements
- The Building Code sets out requirements to be met when a building is constructed, renovated, or undergoes a change of use
- The Building Code is prospective; existing buildings are not required to “catch-up” with new Code requirements
- Purposes of the Building Code include public health and safety; fire protection; structural integrity of buildings; energy efficiency and water conservation; heritage preservation; and accessibility
- The current edition of Ontario's Building Code is the 2012 Building Code, which largely came into effect on January 1, 2014
- Municipal Building Departments enforce the Building Code through permit review, inspection, and orders

The AODA and the Building Code

- The scope of the Final Proposed Standard included public and private sector buildings, and public spaces such as parks, recreational trails and play spaces
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is the primary partner ministry for the built environment, with responsibility for accessibility requirements within buildings, therefore, MMAH developed potential changes to Ontario's Building Code
 - The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario led the development of regulatory requirements for recommendations for public spaces items including parks, recreational trails and play spaces
- On December 27, 2013, Ontario Regulation 368/13 was filed to amend the new 2012 Building Code, O. Reg. 332/12, which enhanced accessibility requirements within the Building Code
 - The amended requirements will substantially enhance accessibility in newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated
 - A one-year implementation period was provided to give the building industry time to adapt to the changed requirements

Accessibility in the 2012 Building Code - Now

- The Building Code has included requirements for accessibility since its first edition in 1975
 - Requirements have been expanded and enhanced with successive editions of the Building Code to reflect advancements in accessibility standards
- Current Building Code requirements address a wide range of accessibility features, including:
 - Accessible building entrances, ramps, and doorways
 - A barrier-free path of travel into and throughout most buildings
 - Barrier-free washrooms
 - Visual fire alarms in public corridors of most buildings and in public auditorium areas of buildings such as theatres, churches, and lecture halls

Accessibility in the 2012 Building Code - Soon

- On December 27, 2013, Ontario Regulation 368/13 was filed to amend the new 2012 Building Code, O. Reg. 332/12, which enhanced accessibility requirements within the Building Code
- The amended requirements will substantially enhance accessibility in newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated
- Amended accessibility requirements come into effect on January 1, 2015
- The Building Code is enforced locally by municipalities, through the building permit process
 - Permit applications submitted as of January 1, 2015 are required to comply with amended requirements
- In general, accessibility amendments in the Building Code do not apply to houses, except for smoke alarms with a visual component

Barrier-Free Path of Travel

- The Building Code currently requires a barrier-free path of travel throughout most occupancies and building types, and sets specific minimum dimensions related to building entrances, minimum doorway and corridor widths, ramp dimensions, passing and rest spaces, and turning spaces
- Effective January 1, 2015, amendments provide for updated requirements, including:
 - Wider doorway widths
 - Enhanced requirements for passing and rest spaces
 - Additional requirements for power door operators at multi-unit residential building entrances and at barrier-free washroom entrances
 - Updated curb ramp requirements
 - New tactile walking surface indicator requirements, to be located at the top of stairs and on landings where a door opens onto the landing
 - Requiring roof spaces with public amenities (e.g., rooftop patios) to have barrier-free paths of travel

Vestibules

- Entry to buildings can be a major problem for persons with disabilities
- The 2012 Building Code has been amended to require:
 - Power door operators on both vestibule doors
 - A 1.5 metre clearance between doors (if in-line) or turning circle (if doors are offset)

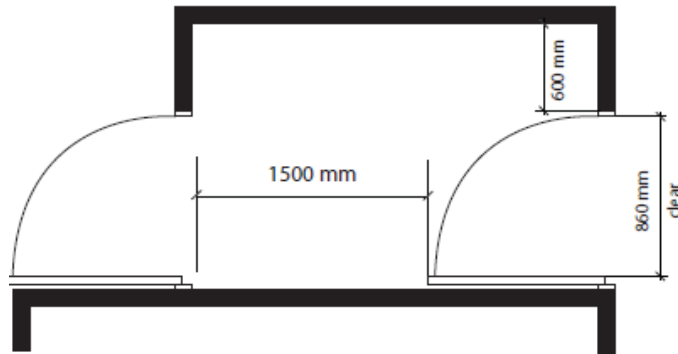


FIGURE A-3.8.3.3.(11)A

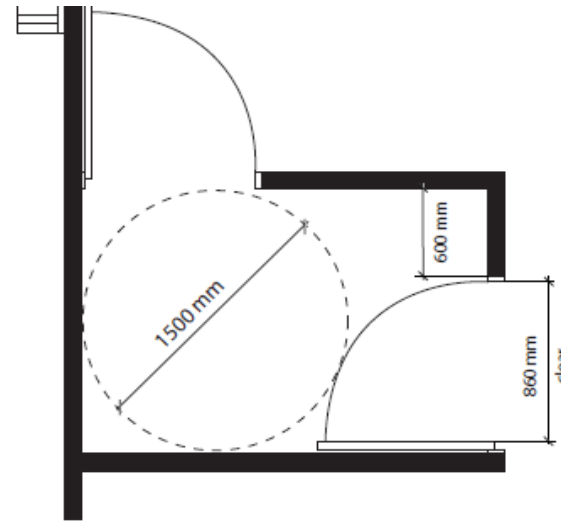


FIGURE A-3.8.3.3.(11)B

Ramps

- The 2006 Building Code had a maximum slope for ramps of 1 in 12
- Consultation proposals for the 2012 Building Code proposed a 1 in 15 maximum slope
- However, no change was made to the slope requirements for ramps; the maximum slope remains 1 in 12.

Vertical Access (Elevators)

- Effective January 1, 2015, most new buildings will be required to provide barrier-free access between all floors, including:
 - Assembly buildings (such as theatres, community centres, and places of worship)
 - Care buildings (such as long-term care homes)
 - Commercial/retail buildings (such as supermarkets and shops)
- The same requirement will apply to residential and office buildings over three storeys in height or over 600 square metres in building area
 - Elevators may still be required in a small building if these buildings include assembly, care or commercial uses on the upper floors.
- Floors without barrier-free access would be required to meet basic accessibility requirements such as:
 - Door handles that do not require tight grasping or twisting motions (e.g., lever door handles)
 - Barrier-free doorways
 - Ambulatory washroom stalls equipped with parallel grab bars

Expanded Renovation Requirements

- Currently, barrier-free requirements apply to renovations only when planned work meets four criteria related to the size of the suite, the extent of the work done, and the accessibility of the floor level
- Effective January 1, 2015, amendments will require a number of barrier-free upgrades in all extensive renovations in smaller (less than 300 square metres in area) suites or suites not located on a fully accessible floor level
- Compliance alternatives and existing requirements for suites that meet all extensive renovation conditions still apply
- These lower-cost “barrier-free light” amendments take advantage of the opportunity to enhance accessibility in existing buildings through planned renovations

Extensive Renovations

- Examples of barrier-free 'light' requirements include:
 - Wider clear door widths
 - Visual cues for glass doors
 - Lever door handles
 - Accessible signage
 - Assistive listening devices
 - Provision of an ambulatory accessible stall
 - Larger stall to accommodate people using canes, crutches, service animal
 - Grab bars on both sides of water closet for stability
 - Turning circle for wheelchair not required
 - Accessible water closet, urinal and lavatory

Universal Washrooms

- New amendments require at least one universal washroom in all buildings
- Multi-storey buildings must provide one universal washroom for every three floors
 - Location not specified – this sets out the number, but leaves flexibility for designers to locate the universal washrooms where appropriate
 - Universal washrooms are not required in floors of high-rise apartment buildings with no amenity space, or in parking garages
- Space for an adult change table will have to be provided in all universal washrooms in large buildings
 - The type of adult change table is not specified
- In small buildings under 300 square metres in building area, the universal washroom is required, but its size is reduced by removing the requirement for space for an adult change table
- Options exist to accommodate universal washrooms in small assembly and restaurant spaces by not specifying gender for washrooms provided
 - Avoids requirement for male, female and universal washrooms

Barrier-Free Washrooms

- The Building Code requires barrier-free washrooms to be provided in public areas of most buildings
- These washrooms must be situated on a barrier-free path of travel and are subject to a number of requirements addressing turning space, doorway widths, grab bars, counter heights and signage, among others
- Effective January 1, 2015, amendments update these requirements in a number of ways. Key changes include:
 - Requirements for power door operators at the entrance door to all barrier-free and universal washrooms
 - Amended mounting height and location requirements for washroom accessories such as towel dispensers and hand dryers
 - Requiring an L-shaped grab bar in all cases and removing the option to provide a diagonal grab bar.
 - Increased minimum clear floor area in barrier-free washroom stalls required to allow for turning space
 - New fold-down grab bar design options to allow for transfer space on both sides of the water closet

Other Changes

- Updated requirements for barrier-free controls
 - Requirements apply to controls such as electrical switches and thermostats that are controlled by the occupant (not building management access only)
- Updated requirements for accessible and adaptable seating spaces in assembly buildings
- New requirements for barrier-free drinking fountains and public telephone shelves, where installed
- Updated requirements for barrier-free hotel rooms, such as the provision of a power door operator at the suite entrance

Guidance

- MMAH and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario are working together to develop a Building Code Guideline for Barrier-Free Design to be released in 2015
- Other supporting material under development include:
 - Updated appendix notes
 - Technical slide deck outlining Code changes

Questions?

Please visit
www.ontario.ca/buildingcode
for further information

Appendix 1

Other Accessibility amendments

Visual Fire Alarms and Smoke Alarms

- Currently, the Building Code requires visual fire alarms (in addition to audible alarms) to be installed in public corridors and auditorium areas in a range of building types
- New amendments expand the range of areas where visual fire alarms will be required, including:
 - Public corridors of all residential buildings
 - All multi-unit residential suites
 - All barrier-free and universal washrooms
- For residential buildings and houses, the 2012 Building Code requires audible smoke alarms on every floor and in every sleeping room of dwelling units
 - Smoke alarms must be hardwired with battery back-up
- New amendments will require all smoke alarms to include a visual component conforming to National Fire Protection Association standards
 - Can be integrated or add-on component
 - Battery back-up requirement does not apply to visual component

Visitable Suites in Apartment Buildings

- Currently, the Building Code requires that 10% of suites in a multi-unit residential building (e.g. “Part 3” apartment or condo) must include some accessible features
- New amendments increase that number from 10% to 15% as well as expanding requirements for what accessible features must be provided
- Under new requirements, 15% of suites must be level throughout the main floor and provide a barrier-free path of travel and doorway into:
 - A bedroom
 - Full bathroom (with a shower or tub)
 - Kitchen (with clear width throughout)
 - Living room
- Suites must be distributed throughout the building and must be proportional to the types and sizes of suites otherwise available in the building

Pools and Spas

- Amendments set new requirements for barrier-free access to and around pools, spas, and locker rooms, including:
 - The provision of ramps, transfer walls, and/or pool lifts for public pools and spas;
 - A barrier-free path of travel between the primary entrance, the pool deck, and change facilities; and
 - Provision of barrier-free washrooms in change facilities.