

Secondary Suites (2015 National Building Code of Canada)

Information and Drawing Requirements

These guidelines apply:

- When upgrading is required to legalize an existing suite that was built after January 1, 1999
- When developing a new secondary suite in an existing one-unit dwelling
- When developing a new secondary suite in a new one-unit dwelling

NOTE 1: Contact Municipal Planning & Development for information related to “Secondary Suites” under the Municipal Zoning Bylaw.

NOTE 2: One set of drawings will be required upon application for a building permit. The drawings must be complete with a site plan, as well as floor plans for all levels in the building. The drawings must identify the use of all rooms, and show the location of all cupboards, stoves, refrigerators, and all plumbing fixtures. Type and location of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms must be identified.

In regard to the proposed suite, dimensioned drawings are required showing the size of all rooms, stair dimensions, and location and size of new and existing windows. A cross section showing room heights and stair headroom must be included. Please specify other information required by this guideline.

Unless more stringent requirements existing in the Municipal Building Bylaw and/or Municipal Zoning Bylaw; these guidelines reflect and summarize some of the key requirements from the 2015 National Building Code (NBC).

1. A minimum room height of 1.95 m (6'-4") [NBC 9.5.3.1.(2)] is required and 1.85 m (6') under beams and ductwork [NBC 9.5.3.1.(3)].
2. At least one window in each bedroom shall provide an unobstructed opening with an area of not less than 0.35m² (3.8 sq ft) and with no dimension less than 380 mm (15") (NBC 9.9.10.).
3. Each dwelling unit must be separated from the other (vertically and horizontally) by a smoke tight barrier of not less than 12.7mm (1/2") drywall [NBC 9.10.9.14.(4) and construction that provides a minimum sound transmission class (STC) rating of 43 [NBC 9.11.1.1.(2)]. This includes the walls and ceiling of a common furnace room [NBC 9.10.10.4(2)(b)].
4. Sound Control: An STC rating of 43 can be provided with the following construction:
 - a) The floor joist spaces must be filled with sound-absorbing material of not less than 150 mm (6") thickness.
 - b) The stud spaces must be filled with sound-absorbing material.
 - c) Resilient channels (sound bars) must be installed at 400 mm (16") or 600 mm (24") spacing on one side of each wall and on the underside of the floor joists [NBC 9.11.1.1(2)].
5. Each secondary suite must have at least one of the following:
 - a) One separate exit, or
 - b) One common exit at grade level where the principal dwelling unit has a separate exit.
 - i. Any common exit must be separated from the dwelling units by a smoke tight barrier not less than 12.7mm (1/2") drywall [NBC 9.9.4.2.(2)].
 - ii. Any stairway to a basement that requires a door at the bottom must also have a landing with its dimensions no less than the width of the stairs (NBC 9.8.6.2. & 9.8.6.3).
6. A pathway that is at least 860 mm (34 in) wide is required from the suite entrance to a public land or street.
7. Doors from shared exits into dwelling units shall be a minimum 45mm (1.8") thick solid core and be equipped with a latch and self-closing device [NBC 9.10.9.3.(2)].
8. Plastic pipe may be used for the plumbing system provided it is used in conformance with the provisions of NBC 9.10.9.6. Plastic pipe used on both sides of the smoke tight barrier must be tight fitting and sealed at all smoke tight barrier penetrations.
9. Bathrooms require an exhaust fan vented to the outdoors (See NBC 9.32 for requirements).

Secondary Suites (2015 National Building Code of Canada)

Information and Drawing Requirements

10. Hard wired smoke alarms shall be installed and interconnected between each individual suite. Interconnected smoke alarms are required on each level. Each bedroom requires a smoke alarm (NBC 9.10.19).
11. Carbon monoxide alarms shall be installed, as per NBC 9.32.3.9, at or near the ceilings and within 5 m (15') of each bedroom door. All carbon monoxide alarms installed in the house must be interconnected.
12. At least one bathroom doorway shall be constructed to accommodate a door not less than 760 mm (30") wide [NBC 9.5.5.3.(2)].
13. Air cannot be vented from one dwelling unit to another. For example, if a forced air heating system is used then separate furnaces are required for each dwelling unit.
14. The ventilation requirements of Section 9.32 as well as the heating and air conditioning requirements of Section 9.33 shall apply (a ventilation design sheet is required).

Pertinent 2015 National Building Code articles are in brackets