

NOVÆ RES URBIS

GREATER TORONTO & HAMILTON AREA

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS! NRU IS NOT PUBLISHING NEXT WEEK, AND OUR OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED, BUT WE WILL BE BACK WITH A NEW ISSUE OF GTHA EDITION THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2025. SEE YOU THEN!

■ ONTARIO BUILDING CODE CHANGES TAKE EFFECT JANUARY 1, BRINGING CHANGES TO SUSTAINABILITY, SAFETY STANDARDS

HARMONIZING IN DIFFERENT KEYS

Matt Durnan

Ontario is getting ready to roll out significant changes to its *Building Code* next month, with a suite of reforms that will better harmonize the Code with the *National Building Code of Canada*. The new code will also introduce higher standards when it comes to matters like building safety, sustainability and accessibility.

The latest iteration of the provincial *Building Code* comes into effect on January 1, 2025, with a three-month grace period until March 31, 2025 for compliance for certain building designs that are already underway. Building permit applications submitted before December 31, 2024 must be guided by the **Province of Ontario's** 2012 Building Code, while applications submitted between January 1 and March 31, 2025 may be submitted using the 2012 Code only if the applicant demonstrates

that their working drawings for a project were substantially complete by December 31, 2024.

“Overall, what is happening is that Ontario is a signatory to the reconciliation agreement on construction codes.

And under this agreement, provinces including Ontario have established terms for

harmonization of our provincial building codes with the *National Building Code* and national model codes that comprise the National Building Code,” **McMillan** partner **Annik Forristal** told *NRU*.

“One of those promises was that when the 2020 National Building Code was published,

which happened in 2022, was that we [Canada's provinces] would harmonize within 24 months. What we're seeing is this new building code coming in, which is not 100 per cent harmonized. The reconciliation agreement does allow the provinces to

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have some province-specific exceptions to what they adopt from the national code, but my understanding is that this is about 70 per cent harmonized with the 2020 national code.”

One of the highlights of how the *Ontario Building Code* will be harmonized with the national code is an update to Ontario’s two-unit residential provisions, which will harmonize with the National Building Code’s requirements for secondary suites, without imposing the national requirements around minimum suite sizes. Ontario will still have authority over suite sizes in order to support the Ontario government’s housing objectives.

“You now have national interests being reflected in provincial codes, so there have been some challenges to two-unit houses—or secondary

suites. We kind of had our own process for how to handle that under the old code. But under the new code, there is going to be some alignment with the national code, which takes away some flexibility on how we were able to deliver secondary suites. And that’s going to make it a bit more difficult,” **Residential Construction Council of Ontario** (RESCON) vice president of building standards and engineering **Paul De Berardis** told *NRU*.

“The biggest [challenge] is the ability to share a heating system. Previously, you could have two [residential] units sharing one heating source, like a furnace. Under the new provisions, that will not be allowed. So you need independent heating sources for each unit, so there’s obviously a cost premium there.”

Climate change

considerations have had a major hand in shaping the forthcoming changes to the *Ontario Building Code*, with the 2024 code putting a strong emphasis on energy efficiency, sustainability and safety.

Going forward, homes and buildings developed in Ontario will require better insulation in order to improve building performance, while new standards will mandate higher-performance windows in order to reduce heat loss. Heating system standards will also be raised in the new code, promoting the use of energy-efficient technologies such as heat pumps.

“I think the intent here is to be addressing safety—increases in safety and compliance. And I think that’s speaking a lot to climate change and what we’re anticipating. What were 100-year [interval] storms may now be 10-year storms. And the concerns are making sure the buildings we’re constructing now can withstand the storms or changes in climate that we’re seeing impact the building industry and our structures now,” McMillan partner **Kailey Sutton** told *NRU*.

“The difficulty in that is we’re having trouble predicting the weather week-to-week and year-to-year, so the industry is trying to come together in consultations to see what we can implement now and try to plan for the future.”

The 2024 Code also puts an enhanced focus on improving accessibility standards to

ensure that both public and private buildings are accessible to everyone. These changes include enhanced requirements for ramps, elevators and door widths to make buildings easier to access and navigate for individuals with mobility challenges.

Another change to the Code that is tied to sustainability is increased height permissions for mass timber buildings. While currently, mass timber buildings can be built to a maximum of 12 storeys in height, under the new Code, mass timber can be constructed to a maximum height of 18 storeys.

There are pros and cons to harmonizing provincial building codes with the National Building Code, but one of the challenges is that this could put builders into a perpetual cycle of trying to play catch-up as the National Code is slated for an update next year, which will beget yet another change to the *Ontario Building Code*.

“National Building Code models are going through an update as well. So, they’re being updated in 2025 and that consultation period is open right now, and Ontario, under the agreement, has agreed to align [with the national code] within 24 months. So we’re aligning with the 2020 code now, but we anticipate more changes to come shortly once the 2025 national code is in effect,” said Sutton.

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The Town of Ajax
We are hiring!

Currently seeking a Temporary Development Engineering Technologist (18 month contract) for review, approval and inspection of development applications for site plans and subdivisions, infill lots, site grading plans for building permits, site servicing permits, driveway widening and swimming pool enclosure applications and other development applications.

Interested? Click here to review the detailed job description.

Application deadline: January 4, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.

ajax.ca/Careers

HARMONIZING IN DIFFERENT KEYS

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One benefit of having a more harmonized set of national and provincial building codes across Canada is that it opens up better access to international suppliers [of construction materials], which increases competitiveness in the market and helps to reduce costs.

“If I can come in and get my product verified and approved as being compliant with the building code, I can sell in all markets. That is much easier than having to get confirmed as code-compliant on a case-by-case, province-by-province basis,” said Forristal.

“There are costs associated with these changes, and our country is huge; things like climate are not the same on the East Coast as they are in the Prairies or on the West Coast, so that is where there is a balancing of interests.”

De Berardis made similar comments around the impacts

of harmonizing the provincial code with the national code, noting that it is a positive to have the two codes aligned, but also pointing out that there is still a divide that exists.

“The challenge is that we have municipalities who are still pursuing their own localized requirements. So those stand in the way of this national harmonized perspective. You also still have provinces that have their own priorities that don’t fit with some of the national views,” De Berardis said.

“Toronto is looking to have more housing types, like three and four-unit houses. British Columbia is looking at single-exit stairs in smaller [mid-rise] buildings. These are things that provinces are still having to go out and do on their own because the national code isn’t always looking at some of the priorities that provinces may


want to do. Quebec has interest in engineered wood products—they were some of the first to do mass timber, and they pushed for that well before the national code did. So, it’s really hard to do true full harmonization when the needs of every province are still somewhat unique.”

The challenges wrought by harmonizing provincial codes with the national code is compounded further by the fact that a new National Building Code is set to be released in 2025 and the harmonization agreement would mean Ontario’s building code will have to be updated within 18 months after that.

“Generally, [historically], Ontario updated the Code every five to seven years. The way the harmonization agreement [with the federal government] is laid out, every time there’s an update to the national code, a provincial update will have to follow within 18 months of that,” said De Berardis.

“The early schedule is that the federal code is going to be released probably in Q1 or Q2 of 2025 so we could potentially

have a new Ontario code by 2026. It’s a pretty drastic timeline, considering we’re bringing in a new Ontario code on January 1, 2025. That model is creating some real challenges when you imagine the number of people involved in a code cycle update: from architects to engineers and designers. On the flip side, you have plans examiners, building inspectors, everyone involved in the regulation of building permitting. It’s a monumental path to bring everyone up to speed.”

The full 2024 Ontario Building Code can be found online on the Province of Ontario website [here](#). 

— PEOPLE —

The **City of Mississauga** has appointed **Sam Rogers** as its new commissioner of transportation & works. Rogers had been serving in the role on an acting basis since June 2024, when previous Mississauga commissioner of transportation and works **Geoff Wright** was appointed Mississauga city manager and chief administrative officer (CAO). Rogers, who first joined the City of Mississauga in 2015 as manager of security services, served as director of infrastructure planning and engineering services prior to taking on the acting transportation & works commissioner role in June.