



2024 Ontario Building Code: A Homeowner's Guide to Secondary Suites

Secondary Suites – Change of Use; 5 years old or older

This document is intended solely as a guide to assist homeowners in understanding the key Building Code requirements for creating a secondary suite within an existing house. It provides an overview of the relevant standards and regulations that may apply to the development of a secondary suite, but it is not an exhaustive reference for all potential requirements.

It is important to note that homeowners are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all necessary approvals are obtained, including securing a zoning certificate, building permits, and any other required documentation. Homeowners are strongly encouraged to consult with local authorities or professionals to ensure full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations before proceeding with any construction or renovation projects.

For more specific guidance, homeowners may wish to consult with a BCIN qualified designer experienced in secondary suite design, who can review the project and offer tailored advice on the design options available under the Ontario Building Code (OBC).

Stud Wall Reinforcement – 9.5.2.4. OBC

New walls around fixtures in the main bathroom of a dwelling unit must be reinforced with blocking to support the future installation of grab bars at the toilet, shower, and bathtub.

Minimum Ceiling Height – 9.5.3 OBC

Ceiling Height	Clear height under beams & ducts
1.95 m (6'-5")	1.85 m (6'-1")

Entrance Doors – 9.7.2.1 OBC

Required	Acceptable Alternative
Dwelling unit doors and any shared entrance doors must include a door viewer, commonly known as a "peephole," or transparent glazing or a side light as part of the door assembly.	Electronic doorbell with camera



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Room sizes – 9.5.3 & Window Areas – 9.7.2.3, C110 OBC - Individual Rooms

Room type	Minimum room size	Minimum window glass area
Living room	13.5 m ² (145 ft ²)	0.675 m ² (7.25ft ²)
Dining room	7 m ² (75 ft ²)	0.35 m ² (3.75 ft ²)
	One bedroom: 3.7 m ² (40ft ²)	
Kitchen	Two bedrooms: 4.2 m ² (45ft ²)	Windows not required
	With closet: 8.8 m ² (95 ft ²)	0.22 m ² (2.5ft ²)
Principal bedroom	Without closet: 9.8 m ² (105ft ²)	0.245 m ² (2.5ft ²)
	With closet: 6 m ² (65 ft ²)	0.15 m ² (1.9 ft ²)
Second bedroom	Without closet: 7 m ² (75ft ²)	0.175 m ² (1.9 ft ²)
Bathroom, utility room, other rooms	No minimum	Windows not required

Room sizes – 9.5.3 & Window Areas – 9.7.2.3, C110 OBC- Combined Spaces

Number of bedrooms in apartment	Minimum room size	Minimum window glass area
Two bedrooms	Living room, dining room, kitchen only: 20.95 m ² (225 ft ²)	0.8375 m ² (9 ft ²)
One bedroom	Living room, dining room only: 16.75 m ² (180 ft ²) Living room, dining room, kitchen only: 17.95 m ² (193 ft ²)	0.7125 m ² (7.5 ft ²)
Studio apartment	Living room, dining room only: 14.25 (153 ft ²) Living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom: 13.5 m ² (145 ft ²) + bathroom	0.675 m ² (7.25 ft ²)

Notes:

- Each dwelling unit must include a living room or space, dining room or space, kitchen, bathroom, and at least one bedroom. One of the bedrooms must be designated as the principal bedroom, except in the case of a studio apartment.



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- See 9.9.10 for egress from bedrooms on that floor level
- Two or more areas may be considered a combination room if the opening between them, which must not contain doors or windows, occupies the greater of 3 m² or 40% of the wall area measured on the side of the dependent area.

Egress – 9.9.9., C139 OBC

Types of Exits	Requirements
Dedicated exit (not shared with another unit)	A door, including a sliding door, that opens directly to the exterior from a dwelling unit, serves only that dwelling unit and has reasonable access to ground level, and the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms installed in conformance with Subsection 9.10.19.
Shared single exit.	The means of egress is separated from the rest of the building by a fire separation with a 30-minute fire-resistance rating. Both dwelling units and common areas must be equipped with smoke alarms that are installed in accordance with Subsection 9.10.19 and are interconnected.
Access to an exit from one dwelling unit which leads through another dwelling unit for an apartment located in the basement.	An additional means of escape is provided through a window that meets the following requirements: The sill height is no more than 1,000 mm (39 in) above or below the adjacent ground level. (See figure 1) The window must open easily from the inside, no tools needed. The opening must be big enough — at least 0.38 m² (4.1 ft²), with no side smaller than 460 mm (18 in), and the bottom of the window can't be more than 900 mm (35 in) off the floor or steps. If the window opens into a well, there needs to be at least 1,000 mm (39 in) of space in front of it. Smoke alarms must be in every unit and shared space, connected to each other, and meet the code in Subsection 9.10.19.



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Access to an exit from one dwelling unit which leads through another dwelling unit for an apartment located above the first storey.

An additional means of escape is provided through a window that meets the following requirements:

A casement window at least 1,060 mm (41.7 in) tall and 560 mm (22 in) wide, with the bottom no higher than 900 mm (35 in) off the floor.

The bottom of the window must be no more than 5 meters (16 ft 5 in) above the ground outside.

- Smoke alarms must be in all units and shared areas, connected to each other, and follow the rules in Subsection 9.10.19.

Additional requirements for exits:

- If an unenclosed exterior exit stair or ramp is the only way out of a suite and is at risk from fire due to openings in nearby walls (like in the other unit or common space), those openings need to be protected with special materials, such as wired glass in steel frames or glass blocks. This is required if the openings are within 3 meters (9 ft 10 in) horizontally and less than 10 meters (32 ft 10 in) below or 5 meters (16 ft 5 in) above the exit stair or ramp (9.9.4.4.). If the openings are not protected, an additional way out may be by way of a means of escape window described above.
- If an exterior exit door is the only way out of a suite and is within 3 meters (9 ft 10 in) of an unprotected opening in the other unit or common space, and the walls meet at an angle of less than 135°, the opening must also be protected with wired glass in steel frames, glass blocks, or a rated fire-resistant closure, depending on the fire separation requirements between the two areas (9.9.4.6.).

Egress from Bedrooms – 9.9.10 OBC

Types of Exits	Requirements
Except where a door on the same floor level as the bedroom provides direct access to the exterior, every floor level containing a bedroom shall be provided with at least one outside window.	The window must: ** (See figure 2) • be openable from the inside without the use of tools, • provide an individual, unobstructed open portion having a minimum area of 0.35 m² (3.8 ft²) with no dimension less than 380 mm (15 in), and • maintain the required opening without the need for additional support.

Note:

Window opening restrictors or guards would be required for any opening greater than 1,800 mm (5 ft 11 in) above the floor or ground on the other side of the window.



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Fire Separations – 9.10.8, 9.10.9., C150 & C156 OBC

Location	Requirements
Walls between suites or common areas.	30-minute fire separation required. 12.7 mm (1/2") drywall on both sides of wall.
Floor/ceiling between suites or common spaces.	15-minute fire separation required. 12.7 mm (1/2") drywall ceiling smoke alarms are required that are interconnected between suites & common areas in conformance with 9.10.19.

Notes:

- All loadbearing walls, columns and arches in the storey immediately below a floor or roof assembly shall have a fire-resistance rating of not less than that required for the supported floor or roof assembly.
- Penetration in the noted assemblies shall be sealed with a fire stop such a Hilti FS-One Max, 3M IC 15WB+, STI WF300 etc. to maintain the fire resistance rating, submit product info prior to installation, note that no "foam" product has been approved for use as a fire stop.
- The horizontal fire separation above furnace rooms is not required when the room is protected by sprinkler(s), providing a minimum average density of 6.5 L/min/m² over the room area. The sprinkler pipe shall be a flow through system, no dead-end pipes permitted. All joist spaces are filled with rock wool insulation or equivalent over the entirety of the furnace room.

Smoke Alarms – 9.10.19, C176 OBC

Locations	Requirements
• At least one smoke alarm per storey, including basements. • A smoke alarm must be installed inside every sleeping room. • A smoke alarm must also be installed in the hallway or area between sleeping rooms and the rest of the storey (if sleeping rooms are off a hallway, the alarm must be in the hallway). • If there is a shared interior means of egress or common area, a smoke alarm is required in each of those shared spaces.	• Smoke alarms shall conform to CAN/ULC-S531, "Standard for Smoke Alarms ." • Smoke alarms may be battery operated • Smoke alarms must be interconnected throughout the entire house. • Smoke alarms must be equipped with a strobe light.



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HVAC – 9.32 C199 & 9.33 C201 OBC

- Ventilation can be provided by natural means or mechanical.
- Interconnected HVAC systems are allowed with the following conditions:
 - Smoke alarms are installed in each dwelling unit.
 - A duct-type smoke detector is installed in the supply or return air duct system, which, when activated, will shut off the fuel supply and electrical power to the heating system.
- The following spaces must maintain the minimum temperatures as specified:
 - 22°C in all living spaces
 - 18°C in ancillary service rooms, ancillary spaces and exits in houses with a secondary suite

Carbon Monoxide Alarms – 9.32.3.9 & C200 OBC

See the Town of Collingwood separate carbon monoxide alarm info sheet as there have been some significant changes to the requirements. Carbon monoxide alarms may be battery operated or plugged into an electrical outlet.

Electrical Facilities – 9.34

- An exterior lighting outlet with fixture controlled by a wall switch located within the *building* shall be provided at every entrance to *buildings of residential occupancy*.
- 3-way wall switches must be installed at both the top and bottom of any stairway with 4 or more risers in houses with a secondary suite, including common spaces, to control at least one light fixture.



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Plumbing Requirements – 7.6.1.3. OBC

Each dwelling unit must include at least the following fixtures: a kitchen sink, a lavatory, a bathtub or shower stall, and a water closet.

Laundry facilities or a space for laundry facilities shall be provided in every dwelling unit or grouped elsewhere in the building in a location conveniently accessible to occupants of every dwelling unit.

Hot water must be maintained at a temperature between 45°C and 60°C, with water from the showerhead or bathtub not exceeding 49°C.

Shut-off valves shall be installed on new fixture installs where shut-off valves are not installed on the water lines into the suites.

Existing plumbing would not need to be altered unless it is adversely affected by a new plumbing install

It is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure the existing servicing to the property is sufficient for the proposed additional demand creating by the secondary suite.



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Drawing Requirements:

A copy of the site plan submitted for the Zoning Certificate application.

Complete floor plans of the existing house with room names clearly labeled.

Detailed floor plans for the proposed Secondary Suite, clearly labeled to show:

- All room names and room sizes

- Wall/ceiling finishes

- Location of all plumbing fixtures

- The location of the proposed exit for the Secondary Suite

- The location of the basement egress window or other means of escape, if applicable

- The location and construction details of the fire separation between the units

- Existing and proposed ceiling heights, including under bulkheads and over stairs

- Existing and proposed window dimensions, including total glass area

- Side elevations if adding new doors or windows, including proposed lintel sizes

If proposing exterior stairs, the following additional information is required:

- Location of stairs/landing – Include distances to property line(s) on the survey or site plan and floor plan.

- Exterior stair design – Detailed construction drawings will be required to be included with your application. In many cases, the design will be required to be stamped by a Professional Engineer.

Properties served by a Septic System will have to have the existing system evaluated to ensure the new unit does not reduce the performance level of the Septic System.

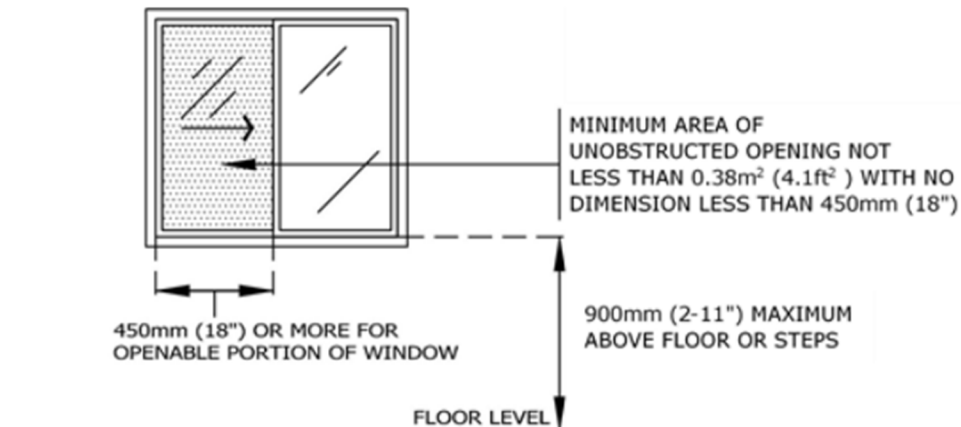
For additional information on applying for a building permit, visit

<https://www.collingwood.ca/development-growth-economy/building-renovating>



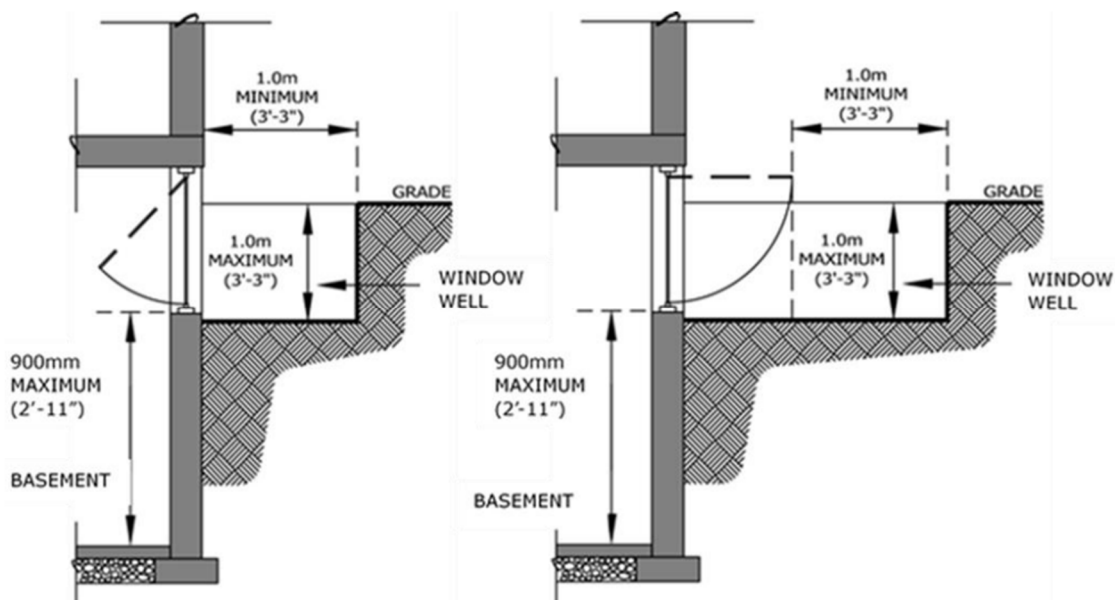
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Figure 1: Escape Window



EXTERIOR SILL HEIGHT:

- SHALL BE NOT MORE THAN 1.0m ($3'-3"$) ABOVE OR BELOW ADJACENT GROUND LEVEL.
- SHALL BE A SINGLE MOTION WINDOW (EG: CASEMENT TYPE).
- SHALL BE OPENABLE FROM THE INSIDE WITHOUT THE USE OF TOOLS OR SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE.





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Figure 2: Bedroom Egress Window

