

LEGALIZING EXISTING SUITES

June 27, 2001

These guidelines only apply to an Existing Suite in a One Unit Dwelling

For the purpose of this guideline an “existing suite” is one that was developed and occupied prior to January 1, 1999. A letter of verification regarding the age of the suite, signed by the current owner will be required. Further proof of the age of the suite may be requested.

Two sets of drawings will be required upon application for a building permit. The drawings must be complete and include the site plan and the floor plan of the main floor and secondary suite. The drawings must identify the size and use of all rooms, stair dimensions, room heights and stair headroom, location and size of new and existing windows, and show the location of all cupboards, stoves, refrigerators, and plumbing fixtures. Type and location of smoke alarms must be identified.

These guidelines reflect minimum acceptable standards.

1. Access to each suite must be gained without passage through a service room.
2. Dwelling units must be separated from each other (vertically and horizontally) by a fire separation having a fire resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes.
3. The furnace room must be separated from all adjacent areas by a 30 minute fire rating (walls only). A solid core door complete with latch and closer is required.
4. Interior exit stairs must be separated from the remainder of the building by a fire separation having a fire resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes.
5. Doors and door frames from the common exit into the dwelling units must have a 20 minute fire protection rating and be equipped with a latch and closer as per the National Building Code (NBC) (a 45mm thick solid core door and 38 mm solid wood casings is acceptable).
6. Rise and run, width and headroom of stairs must reasonably conform to NBC and stairs must have the required handrails and guards.
7. Ceiling height in exit corridor cannot be less than 1.95m (6'-5"). Projections or obstructions cannot reduce the headroom clearance to less than 1.80m (5'-11").
8. Ceiling height in all rooms of the second suite cannot be less than 1.95m (6'-5") over 75% of the area. Projections or obstructions cannot reduce the headroom clearance to less than 1.80m (5'-11").
9. Hard wired smoke alarms must be installed in each dwelling unit and interconnected in accordance with the current National Building Code (NBC).
10. A carbon monoxide alarm must be installed in all furnace rooms.
11. The secondary suite must have at least two openable windows to the outside (one must be in each bedroom). Size of the required window(s) cannot have a dimension less than 380mm (15 in) and cannot be less than 0.35m² (3.8 ft²) in area.
12. All bathrooms must have mechanical or natural ventilation.
13. All bathrooms must be fully enclosed and have a lockable door.
14. Combustion air is required into the furnace room.

NOTE: Separate permits are required for existing plumbing work that was done without a permit or for new plumbing work.