Building Code adoption process

Here are some helpful tips to better understand the National Building Code structure and code changes. These tips will help get you thinking before the workshop on **October 8**.

Building Code adoption process

Provincial and territorial adoption

Under Canada's constitution, provinces and territories regulate the design and construction of houses and buildings, and the maintenance and operation of fire safety systems in existing buildings.

The National Model Codes are developed and maintained by the Canadian Board of Harmonized Construction Codes (CBHCC). The documents serve as models for provincial and territorial building and fire regulations and come into effect once adopted in full or in part by an authority having jurisdiction. In some cases, the National Model Codes are amended or supplemented to suit regional needs and then published as jurisdictional codes.

While the National Model Codes are prepared centrally under the direction of the CBHCC, adoption and enforcement of the Codes are the responsibility of the provincial and territorial authorities.

Yukon adoption

Right now, the Yukon automatically adopts the National Building Code on April 1 after the code is published or 6 months after it is published, whichever is later. The Yukon government has extended the adoption date for the 2025 code to June 22, 2027, and is working on modernizing the adoption process.

This engagement will help the Yukon government understand what, if any, exemptions we need to make before the 2025 code is adopted next June. These changes can be made through regulatory amendments before the new code comes into effect.

We want to know if this engagement works for you, and how we can support the building industry to adjust to changing requirements. Tell us on our website, or by emailing nbc.engagement@yukon.ca.

Part 3 – Adaptability and accessibility changes in the NBC 2025

NBC 2025 introduces two new articles that, for the first time in the National Building Code, set requirements for accessibility features inside individual dwelling units. Section 3.8.4 covers Adaptable Dwelling Units and Section 3.8.5 covers Visitable Dwelling Units. Neither of these subsections existed in NBC 2020.

3.8.4.3.(2). Wall reinforcement in bathrooms

A-3.8.4.3.(2) Reinforcement of Walls around Water Closets. Where two side walls are within 600 mm of the centre line of the water closet, both side walls are intended to be reinforced for the present or future installation of grab bars.

Figure A-3.8.4.3.(2) illustrates an example of an acceptable configuration for the reinforcement of stud walls around a water closet. Possible grab bar configurations are also shown.

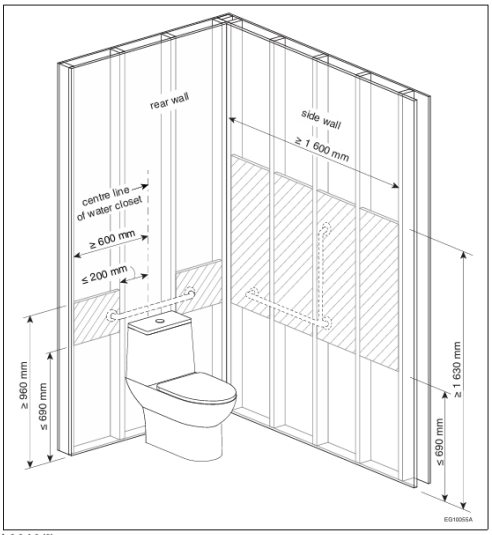


Figure A-3.8.4.3.(2)
Example of an acceptable configuration for the reinforcement of stud walls around a water closet, where the horizontal length of the side wall is equal to or greater than 1 600 mm

Adaptable Units – Section 3.8.4

Adaptable units are built to make future accessibility upgrades easy and affordable. Required features include:

- a wider entrance door;
- light switches and electrical outlets at accessible heights; and
- wall reinforcement (blocking/backing) in bathrooms around the toilet, shower, and tub so grab bars can be added later without major renovation.

These features cost little at time of construction but are expensive to retrofit.

Visitable units – Section 3.8.5

Visitable units include everything in Section 3.8.4, plus additional features so that a visitor using a wheelchair or walker can enter independently, move through the main level, and use a washroom. This requires an accessible entrance with no steps, wider hallways and doorways on the main level, and an entrance-level bathroom with enough space to turn a mobility aid. This section is triggered only when the adopting jurisdiction requires it.

Who it applies to

These sections primarily apply to apartment-style buildings with accessible common corridors. Detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, and row houses are generally exempt. Jurisdictions — including Yukon — can tailor the application of these sections to suit local context.

How did it come about?

The National Model Codes Committee (NMCC) on acessibility developed code changes related to accessibility in buildings and houses in the National Model Codes as described below and in accordance with the Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes (CBHCC) approved work plan. Refer to Terms of Reference for National Model Codes Committee on Accessibility

Key Yukon-Specific Considerations for 3.8.4 and 3.8.5

- Yukon's housing stock skews toward smaller communities, remote sites, and detached housing forms — most of which are currently **exempt** from these provisions.
- Apartment and multi-unit residential buildings in Whitehorse are where these sections will most likely apply.
- Cold climate integration: Wider doorways and threshold design must also account for air sealing and vestibule requirements — builders will need to integrate accessibility and energy performance simultaneously.
- Grab bar blocking is low-cost at framing and highly recommended even where not yet required — it future-proofs Yukon's housing stock for an aging population.
- First Nations self-governing communities may have their own building standards. Always check with the relevant government before assuming NBC applies.
- Yukon previously exempted log homes from Section 9.36 energy requirements — similar jurisdiction-specific exemptions may be considered for 3.8.4/3.8.5 in remote or small communities. Ideas for future exemptions are welcome and can be shared here.
- Builders are encouraged to attend Government of Yukon and City of Whitehorse NBC 2025 engagement sessions on October 8 and Oct 20 to learn more and share their input on Yukon-specific considerations.

Code numbering system

A consistent numbering system is used throughout the National Model Codes. The first number indicates the Part of the code; the second, the Section in the Part; the third, the Subsection; and the fourth, the Article in the Subsection. The detailed provisions are found at the Sentence level (indicated by numbers in brackets), and Sentences may be broken down into Clauses and Subclauses. This structure is illustrated as follows:

3	Part
3.5.	Section
3.5.2.	Subsection
3.5.2.1.	Article
3.5.2.1.(2)	Sentence
3.5.2.1.(2)(a)	Clause
3.5.2.1.(2)(a)(i)	Subclause

Electronic versions of the National Model Codes are available for free through the **NRC Publications Archive**. Hard copies of code documents are also available for purchase through the **NRC Virtual Store**.

Got thoughts? Share them with us!

Tell us how you think we should adapt the National Building Code for the Yukon.

To learn more and provide your input, visit National Building Code engagement | Engage Yukon

Contact us
Send us your feedback or contact us with questions. Email nbc.engagement@yukon.ca

Yukon

Whitehorse
THE WILDERNESS CITY