

# The Purpose of the Ontario Building Code

Since 1976, the Ontario Building Code has set the minimum standard for the design and construction of all new buildings and for additions, alterations and change of use of existing buildings in the Province of Ontario. The Code is a mandatory document used by architects, engineers, designers, builders, suppliers and manufacturers with regard to construction projects which are regulated by the Code. The purpose of the Code is to set minimum standards for construction to minimize the risk to the health and safety of the occupants of a building and to provide for the barrier-free accessibility into a building and the energy efficiency of that building.

## Provincial Responsibility

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing of the Province of Ontario is responsible for the development of, and the amendments to, the Building Code Act and the Code, which came into effect as a regulation of that Act. The other responsibilities of the ministry include the Building Code Commission, which rules on disputes involving interpretations of the Code and the issuance of permits within prescribed timeframes, and the Building Materials Evaluation Commission, which adjudicates on materials and systems, which are not included in the Code. The Ministry may be contacted at 416.585.6666 or at its website:

[www.mah.gov.on.ca](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca)

## Municipal Responsibility

Every municipality in Ontario is given the responsibility for the enforcement of the Building Code Act and the Code. It requires them to appoint a Chief Building Official and inspectors to issue permits and perform inspections. Municipalities may charge fees to defray the cost of Code enforcement and pass bylaws which include requirements for application, plan and document submission, classes of permits, inspection notification stages and various other associated requirements. Details can be obtained from the local Municipal Building Department.

## Ontario Building Officials Association

The OBOA is a self-governing, not for profit organization committed to establishing and maintaining a high professional standard in the field of the enforcement of the Ontario Building Code, including issuance of permits and inspection of buildings, to ensure that the people who occupy buildings, which are subject to the Code, are protected.

The OBOA was founded in 1956 and has expanded to a current membership of almost 2,000 building officials with a Chapter network throughout Ontario.

### Membership services provided by the OBOA include:

- OBOA Journal. This is published 4 times per year and focuses on the fundamental interests, concerns and opinions of building officials.
- Education and training programs with regard to the Building Code Act and the Ontario Building Code.
- An Annual Meeting and Training Session, which provides 3 days of technical and educational seminars.
- A Certification and Maintenance program for building officials.
- Representation on various Task Groups, Boards and Committees.
- A Province wide forum, which provides opportunities to communicate with other building officials, government officials and the construction industry

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# Building Code

## How it Affects You



**“BUILD IT BY THE BOOK”**

# The Ontario Building Code

## How it affects you

### What is a “Code”?

A Code is a collection of requirements, policies, rules or guidelines pertaining to a specific subject or activity, to set standards which pertain to that subject or activity. A Code may merely be a guideline or a series of principles, as in a code of conduct of an organization, such as a dress code, or it may be a series of laws and regulations, such as the Criminal Code of Canada. A Building Code is a compiled list of requirements for construction of new buildings and additions or alterations to existing buildings, developing and expanding over time. Such a Code sets the standards for the various components of a building, including the structure, type of materials, plumbing, fire protection systems, occupant load, and the other systems installed in a building.

### A Brief History of Building Codes.

Building Codes are not a product of modern society, but rather have evolved from the distant past. In biblical times, the Code of Hammurabi (the ruler of Babylonia) was decreed and one of the articles in this Code stipulated that in the event of the collapse of a house, in which the householder was killed, then “the builder shall be slain”. Rather drastic! An example of further code development was in England, during the reign of King Charles II in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the great fire of London, which engulfed most of the city and caused considerable loss of life and the destruction of most of the houses in the city. In North America, the first building regulations were developed in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of fires in buildings which caused many fatalities. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, codes were developed, which laid the basis for testing methodology, specifications and the various formats, which can be found in the codes of today. The prime purpose was to reduce fire hazards but other principles of a more humanitarian nature also emerged and those were to protect the health, welfare and safety of the public. The Ontario Building Code has embraced and enhanced the above philosophy. In addition, the Government of Ontario took an additional step, to create uniformity across the Province, by making this Code mandatory across Ontario and by creating a process to reflect current technology in the methods and materials used in construction.

### The Purpose of the Ontario Building Code.

The prime purpose of the Ontario Building Code, as indicated above is protection of people, to allow them to enter, occupy and leave buildings safely. The principles on which the standards in the Code are based are Health, Safety, Accessibility and Energy Efficiency. The Code is an evolutionary document, which is regularly updated to respond to technological advances and the ever changing needs of society. The most recent edition of the code takes a step further by incorporating objectives into the code and permitting a process to allow enhanced flexibility in meeting code requirements.

## How does the Code Help You?

- **The implementation and use of the Ontario Building Code helps to minimize the risk to the health, welfare and safety of the public.**

We all need protection from tragedy caused by fire, structural collapse and general deterioration of the structures that surround us: our homes, schools, offices, stores and factories. The Ontario Building Code provides protection by reducing potential hazards to building occupants – ourselves and families.

- **It keeps construction costs down.**

The Ontario Building Code provides for uniformity in the construction industry. This uniformity allows builders, suppliers and manufacturers to do business on a larger scale, Province-wide, than if construction was either unregulated or if the requirements were different between municipal jurisdictions. Larger scale gives rise to cost savings, which are ultimately passed on to the customer.

- **It provides for consistent construction standards across Ontario.**

The Ontario Building Code has established predictable and consistent minimum standards, which are applied to the quality and durability of construction and the materials used in construction.

- **It contributes to the well-being of a community.**

The preservation of life, health and safety, as well as the maintenance of property values over time, are a direct result of the application and enforcement of the Ontario Building Code and its predecessors.

## ALWAYS REMEMBER

**“BUILD IT BY THE BOOK”**