

## Ontario Building Code – (Tiny Home) Bedroom Sizes

- In the past, many municipalities would set minimum sizes for single family homes. These are being eliminated as officials recognize there is no logic to sustaining this old practice which contributed to urban sprawl and Canada being among the top 3 countries in the world on home square ft per capita.
- Notwithstanding the elimination of minimum home sizes under municipal official plans and zoning, the Ontario Building Code (OBC) continues to impose specific size requirements for overall home size, as well as the sizes of rooms within a dwelling.
- The OBC sets the minimum home size in an open concept layout as **17.5m<sup>2</sup> or 188.4 sq. Ft.**
  - 13.5 m<sup>2</sup> for sleeping, kitchen, dining, living room, 3 m<sup>2</sup> for bathroom (toilet, sink, shower stall) 1 m<sup>2</sup> for laundry (Division B, Subsections 9.5.4. to 9.5.9. and 9.31.4.2.)
- Under the OBC if you separate the spaces with walls, the size requirements get larger
  - Open concept kitchen, dining, living room 11 m<sup>2</sup>, bedroom 9.8 m<sup>2</sup> (or 95 sq ft) , total **20.8m<sup>2</sup> (224 sq ft)**
  - Open concept kitchen, dining, living room 11 m<sup>2</sup>, bedroom 9.8 m<sup>2</sup>, second bedroom 7 m<sup>2</sup> (75 sq ft) , total **28.5m<sup>2</sup> (306 sq ft)**
  - There is no specific set aside for bathroom space though it needs to be enough for a sink, toilet and shower stall
- Ceiling height is variable though essentially 2300mm (7'6.5") in Ontario, National Building Code sets the standard at 2100 mm
- Doors cannot be sliding, but can open outwards to save space.
- PEI, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan uses the National Building Code
- BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec have their own building codes.
  - In BC, a bedroom minimum size is 75 square feet, or 65 square feet if there is a closet or similar built-in
  - In Alberta and Quebec, there is no minimum bedroom size but there are rules related to fire safety (e.g. windows, egress)
- The **Ontario Building Code sets a minimum size standard for the size of bedrooms** in (tiny) homes. Those sizes fall between a range of 105.5 square feet and 65 square feet. Where a bedroom falls within this range depends on whether it is a “master” bedroom or not, and whether it has built in closets. **Where the amount of square feet comes from in the building code is not clear.**

In looking at building codes, other than Ontario, **in all provinces and territories but one there are no required dimensions for bedrooms** when building a home, tiny or otherwise. Rather, their prescriptive rules focus on safety (e.g. window size for egress, ceiling heights, stairs, smoke and CO detection), which Ontario does as well.

The National Building Code is the code used in most of Canada and it has no bedroom size standards. British Columbia is the only province that sets a bedroom size standard in its building code and it is over 30 sq ft less for a bedroom than Ontario.

Building code harmonization has been a priority for all provinces and territories, including Ontario. While this has occurred in most of the country, this has not yet happened in Ontario. This makes it an outlier and **undermines interprovincial trade** by making it more challenging for factory-built home manufacturers to build homes that can be sold across the country (and in Ontario in particular). Lack of standardization **increases the cost of manufacturing which undermines affordability**.

It also **increases the complexity for municipal officials and others who verify building code compliance for factory-built homes**. If a factory-built home is constructed outside Ontario, those inspecting the home when built need to know unique Ontario standards. At the same time, there is added pressure on Ontario municipal officials to make sure an out-of-province constructed home meets Ontario's unique standards. **Lack of consistency raises the cost** across Canada to verify compliance (the greater the number of unique rules, the greater the cost) while adding complexity that can lead to errors in applying rules. This contrasts with other provinces and territories where meeting a CSA factory-verified standard based on a National Building Code once is sufficient verification.

While minimum room sizes under the Ontario Building Code are out of step with the rest of the country, they reflect what had been a common Ontario municipal practice of setting a minimum house size. **Municipalities across Ontario have been repealing these minimum home size bylaws and zoning standards in recognition that they do not reflect today's world and undermine affordability**. They are also **not consistent with Ontario's recent regulatory and policy changes** to encourage the use of small accessory dwelling units as part of overall efforts to solve the province's housing supply crisis.

Prescriptive bedroom size **undermine creative design options**. It can result in **allocating space in a tiny home in ways that its occupants do not want**. This **can require a home to be unnecessarily larger** than truly needed as space needs to be allocated to bedrooms that may not be required/desired by its occupants. This **undermines affordability as there is a cost for every square foot** of home. Equally, every square foot added requires more materials and more energy to maintain, which **undermines the sustainability** of the home.

To make matters worse, **bedroom size requirements under the Ontario Building Code are the same whether you are building a 3000 square foot home, or a 300 square foot tiny home**. Put differently, under the Code, a disproportionate amount of home space

is required to be allocated to bedrooms in a tiny home when compared to a larger single-family home.

In summary, eliminating minimum bedroom sizes under the Ontario building code will:

- advance affordability,
- support creative design,
- foster sustainability,
- allow homeowners to set bedroom sizes in accordance with their needs and preferences,
- align with other Ontario policy/regulatory changes that promote increasing housing supply through the construction of smaller homes,
- foster interprovincial trade and associated savings of national consistency, and
- simplify compliance verification for government officials and those constructing factory-built homes, with efficiencies and savings flowing from that.

