

## Fact Sheet – Barrier-Free and Universal Washrooms

### What is the Building Code?

- Ontario's Building Code addresses new construction, renovations, and change of use or demolition of a building. The Building Code has been in place since 1975 and sets minimum standards for construction in Ontario.

### What has changed?

- The Building Code was recently amended to enhance barrier-free design requirements (accessibility) for new construction and extensive renovations.
- The Building Code already requires barrier-free washrooms to be provided in public areas of buildings where barrier-free requirements apply. Updated requirements are intended to enhance accessibility and reflect new research on the dimensions needed to accommodate people with disabilities.
- Requirements take effect January 1, 2015, and apply only to new construction or extensive renovations.

### What are the new requirements for barrier-free washrooms?

- The Building Code requires that barrier-free washrooms be situated on a barrier-free path of travel and meet design requirements addressing turning space, doorway widths, grab bars, counter heights, and signage, among others.
- New amendments update design requirements for barrier-free washrooms in a number of ways. Key changes include:
  - Requirements for power door operators at the entrance door to all barrier-free washrooms;
  - Amended mounting height and location requirements for accessories such as towel dispensers and hand dryers;
  - New fold-down grab bar design options to allow for transfer space on both sides of the water closet;
  - Requiring an L-shaped grab bar in all cases and removing the option to provide a diagonal grab bar; and
  - Increased minimum clear floor area in barrier-free washroom stalls required to allow for turning space.

### What is a universal washroom? What are the new requirements for universal washrooms?

- Universal washrooms are enclosed washrooms providing a barrier-free toilet and sink and turning space to accommodate a wheeled mobility device. A power door operator must be provided at the entrance door.
- Universal washrooms can provide privacy and dignity for people of all abilities, including people with disabilities who may need the assistance of an attendant. Universal washrooms can also benefit families with small children and are not required to be designated for people with disabilities only.
- Amendments to the Building Code require at least one universal washroom in almost all buildings in which a washroom is required. Multi-storey buildings must provide one universal washroom for every three floors.
- Multi-unit residential buildings will be required to provide a universal washroom only on floors where common amenity spaces are provided. Common amenity spaces would include features like party rooms or exercise rooms.
- Universal washrooms can be located wherever is most appropriate within the building.
- Space for an adult change table will have to be provided in all universal washrooms located in buildings or suites over 300 square metres in size.

### What do I have to do if I own or manage an existing building?

- Unless you are planning an extensive renovation, existing buildings are not affected. You do not have to change or upgrade washroom facilities in existing buildings to comply with new requirements.

### Why were these changes made?

- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law in 2005. The purpose of the AODA is to benefit all Ontarians by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards.
- As part of achieving Ontario's goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025, Ontario is working to create a Building Code that demonstrates leadership in barrier-free design and is responsive to the needs and concerns of all its stakeholders.

### Who can I call for more information?

- For more information, visit [www.ontario.ca/buildingcode](http://www.ontario.ca/buildingcode) or contact your municipality's building department.