





## Secondary Suite Application and Technical Requirements

*The purpose of this guideline is to assist the homeowner builder and contractor with the Building Permit process for a secondary suite within a single family dwelling. This may not be an exhaustive list of all requirements. Additional information may be requested during the processing of your Building Permit.*

All secondary suites are required to have a Building Permit whether they are being considered as an alteration to an existing dwelling or as an inclusion into a new dwelling under construction.

It is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure all work for the construction of a secondary suite or the alteration to an existing dwelling to accommodate a secondary suite complies with Part 9 Housing and Small Buildings requirements for secondary suites from the current edition of the BC Building Code and all other applicable Township of Langley bylaws or enactments. For more information regarding secondary suite requirements, refer to [tol.ca](http://tol.ca).

### Building Permit Application

Applications for a Building Permit are made at the Permit, Licence, and Inspection Services Department.

#### The applicant must provide:

- completed Building Permit application form
- current title – title search is no older than 30 days prior to permit application
- 3 sets of floor plans are to include:
  - all rooms clearly labeled
  - all door and window locations with sizes shown
  - location of smoke alarms and CO detectors
  - location of existing or proposed sprinkler heads (if installed) to be relocated or installed
  - suite heating system
  - a detail of the construction for the fire separation and resultant fire resistance rating between the secondary suite and the principal dwelling at adjacent walls and the floor/ceiling
  - room use and sizes, as well as adjacent rooms to the addition / alteration.

### Additional Requirements

- only one secondary suite permitted in a single family dwelling
- secondary suites must be located in a building containing only a residential occupancy
- secondary suites will not be permitted in a townhouse, multifamily unit, row house, manor house or where a coach house has already been legally constructed on the lot
- secondary suite area cannot exceed 120m<sup>2</sup> (1291 sq ft) of finished living area; does not include areas used for common storage, common laundry facilities, or common egress areas

- secondary suite is located in and part of a building which is a single real estate entity. The secondary suite cannot be subdivided from the building under the Strata Property Act. This means both dwelling units are registered under the same title.
- secondary suites must obtain an annual Secondary Suite Licence and will be charged utility fees for water and sewer (where applicable)

### Properties Serviced by Private Septic/ Well Systems

- building referral form is to be completed by a Registered Waste Water Practitioner for all principal dwellings on properties serviced by private septic systems
- 3 sets of floor plans to be submitted; 2 must be signed by the Registered Practitioner

### Technical Requirements for New and Existing Secondary Suites

All suites are to have a:

- kitchen sink, lavatory, bathtub or shower, and water closet
- heating system capable of maintaining a minimum temperature of 22°C during the heating season (e.g. electric baseboard)
- minimum ceiling height of not less than 2.0m (6'6")

## Safety Requirements

- BC Building Code requires smoke alarms be installed within dwelling units at specific locations
- hard wired smoke alarm installed at required bedroom and hallway locations
- installation and interconnection of a Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm may be required where a fuel burning appliance or storage garage is present
- an additional hard wired, interconnected photo-electric smoke alarm installed in both the secondary suite and the principal dwelling
- an exit must be provided directly to the exterior unless a fire separated shared exit is provided; exits are not permitted through a garage or service room
- stair width shall be a minimum 860mm (34") with a rise and run configuration that conforms to the requirements of the BC Building Code
- for dwellings equipped with a fire suppression system, modifications to the system may be required to ensure it complies with the applicable NFPA standard

## Secondary Suite Heating / Ventilation System

- for **existing** dwellings with an interconnected forced air heating and ventilation system between the principal dwelling and the secondary suite, one of the following three options may be used to bring the system into compliance:
  - i. the heat register outlets and cold air returns are to be disconnected from the main air plenum and covered and sealed; secondary suite would then be supplied with electric baseboard heaters
  - ii. where the heating or ventilation duct systems serve both the secondary suite and the principal dwelling, the system shall be designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from a duct type smoke detector. Ducts penetrating fire separations shall be equipped with fire dampers if the duct system serves both the principal dwelling and the secondary suite
  - iii. an independent furnace and duct system may be installed to heat the secondary suite
- a secondary suite, new or existing, is to have its own principal fan sized and controlled in conformance to the ventilation requirements of the current edition of the BC Building Code
- new dwellings are to be designed so that the furnace room for the principal dwelling is not located in the secondary suite
- existing dwellings that have the furnace room located in the secondary suite are to have doors to the furnace room of a hinged type complete with weather stripping and a self-closing device

## Separation between the Principal Dwelling and the Secondary Suite

- secondary suites shall maintain a minimum 30 minute fire separation between itself and the principal dwelling
- load bearing walls and supporting structures (including beams) are to have equivalent fire resistance ratings on both sides of the wall
- ceilings between the secondary suite and the principal dwelling are to have an assembly with the required fire resistance rating as described in the BC Building Code, either by Part 3, as per the Part 9 appendix table for Fire and Sound Resistance of Floors, Ceilings, and Roofs, or as calculated in Appendix D Fire-Performance Rating Component Additive Method
  - it is noted that various existing ceiling assembly configurations may require modifications to achieve the required fire resistance rating for the ceiling assembly
- combustible drain, waste, and vent piping must be enclosed by a minimum of 12.7mm (½") gypsum board. Penetrations of horizontal fire separation on the underside of the protection membrane are not permitted. Openings in the gypsum board around the drain, waste, or vent piping are to be sealed.

## Required Inspections:

- Rough Plumbing Inspection
- Frame Inspection
- Insulation and Environmental Barrier Inspection
- Boarding Inspection
- Final Building Inspection

## More Information:

Community Development Division  
Permit, Licence, and Inspection Services  
20338 – 65 Avenue, Langley V2Y 3J1  
604.533.6018 or [cdinfo@tol.ca](mailto:cdinfo@tol.ca)