

# Accessibility and Housing in the National Building Code

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Overview of proposed changes:  
2025 and beyond

26 April 2024

Canadian Home Builders Association Webinar Series

# Outline

**Accessibility in the National Building Code (NBC)**

**Adaptability and visitability of dwelling units: what to expect**

**Proposal for the next code cycle and how to get involved**



**CBHCC**  
Canadian Board for Harmonized  
Construction Codes

# Outline

## Accessibility in the National Building Code (NBC)

Adaptability and visitability of dwelling units: what to expect

Proposal for the next code cycle and how to get involved



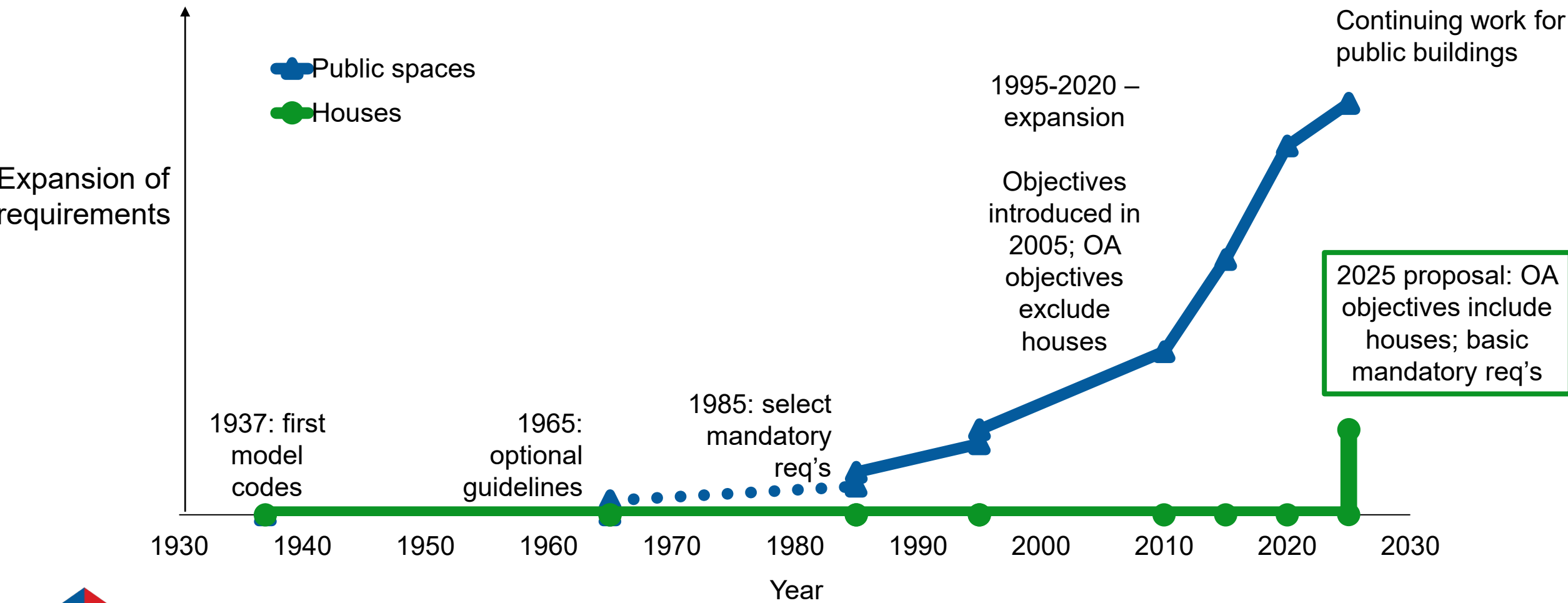
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# Accessibility in the National Building Code – Recent policy directions

- Evolving context of accessibility
  - Worldwide and federal, provincial, territorial initiatives
  - Changing regional needs and demographics
- Recent direction to expand the scope of accessibility in the NBC
  - Adaptable and visitable housing
  - Egressibility



# History of Accessibility in the National Building Code



# Accessibility in the NBC – General

Accessibility in buildings proposed for NBC 2025

- Illumination levels
- Protruding objects in paths of travel
- Ramp slopes
- Accessible fire alarm pull stations
- Accessible locations for menstrual product dispensers



# Outline

Accessibility in the National Building Code

**Adaptability and visitability of dwelling units: what to expect**

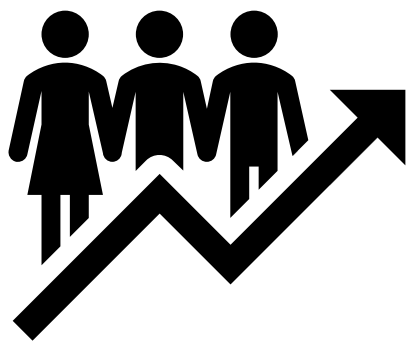
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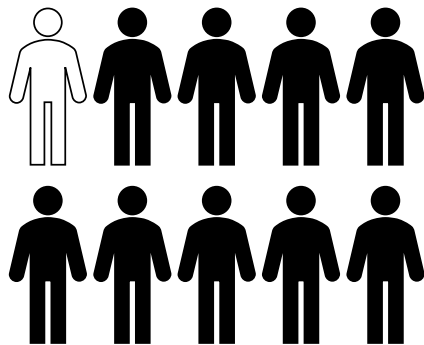
# As the Canadian population ages, more of us will live with disabilities

Strategies are needed to allow Canadians to live in the community for longer as their needs evolve



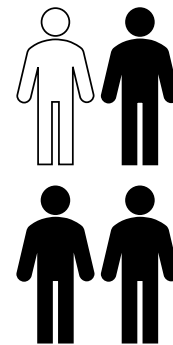
68%

Projected growth of Canadian population over 65 years, 2017 to 2037<sup>1</sup>



10%

% of Canadians over 15 years with a mobility disability in 2022<sup>2</sup>



25%

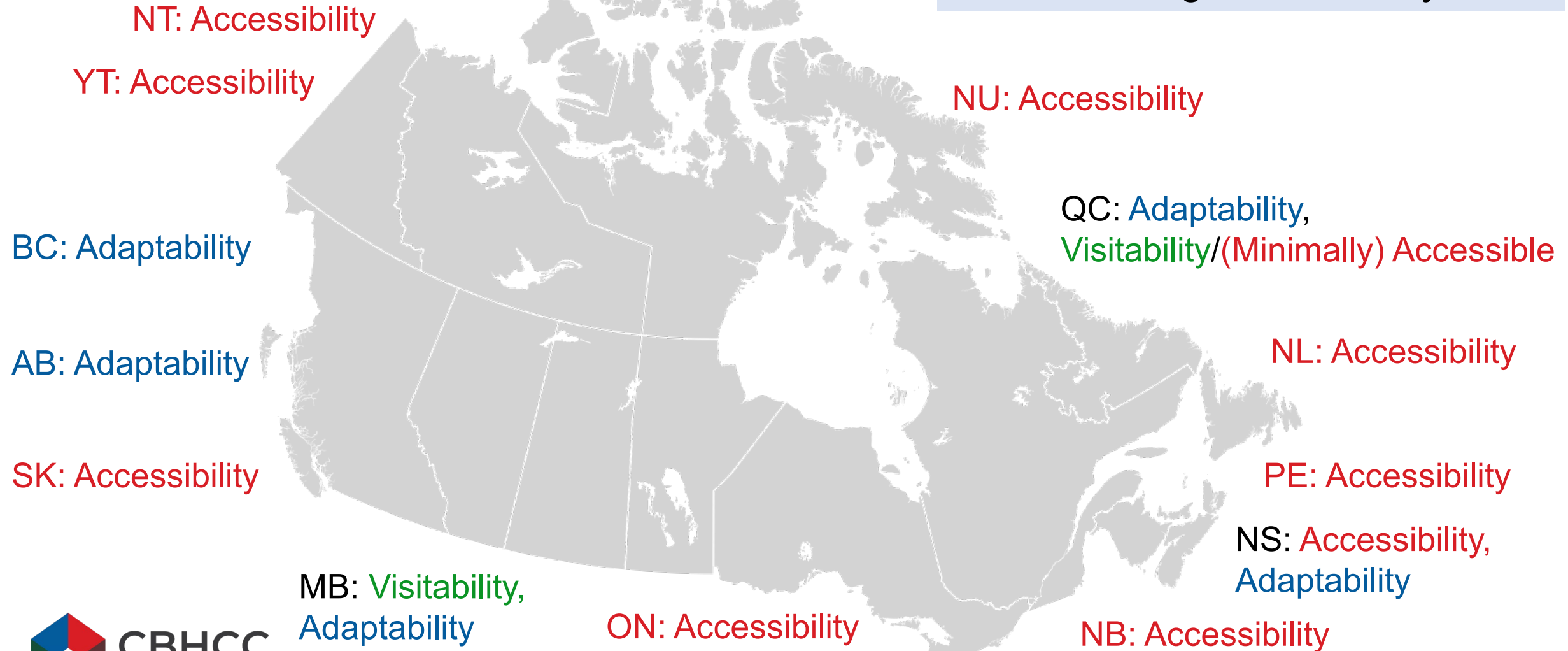
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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Institutes for Health Information, *Canada's seniors' population outlook*; <sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, *"Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022"*



# Accessibility and housing across Canada

Most provinces and territories address accessibility and housing in some way



# Accessibility and houses in the provinces and territories

Nova Scotia and Ontario (and BC in 2025) already have basic accessibility-esque requirements that apply to 100% of houses

BC: Adaptability  
(effective 2025)

- accessibility objectives change
- grab bar backing

ON: Accessibility

- accessibility objectives apply
- grab bar backing

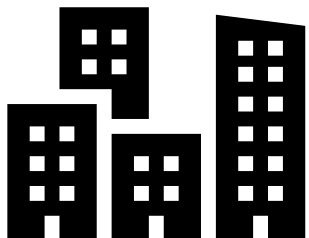
NS: Adaptability

- accessibility objectives apply selectively
- grab bar backing
- wider exterior & interior doors
- control height
- p-trap height
- + others

# Terminology



**Adaptability:** low-cost requirements and/or elements difficult to retrofit to accommodate changing needs of dwelling unit residents



**Visitability:** basic features of a dwelling unit that allow a person who uses an assistive mobility device to visit friends and family in their homes

# Accessibility and dwelling units: Proposed for 2025

## NBC Framework

- Expand accessibility objective to apply to all types of dwelling units
- Clarify application of accessibility requirements in NBC 3.8.

### Subsection 3.8.4. – Adaptability

#### Applies to...

All houses  
Some units in MURBs

#### What's required

- 1 wider home entrance
- Frequently-used switches and plugs within reach
- Backing for grab bars in washrooms\*\*

### Subsection 3.8.5. – Visitability

#### Applies to...

Some units in MURBs

#### What's required

- Adaptability requirements
- Wider path to entry level living/ dining space\*\*
- 1 larger washroom\*\*

\*\* Spring 2024 public review (tentatively)

No cost, but necessary for any technical requirements under accessibility and housing to be considered

### NBC Framework

- Expand accessibility objective to apply to all types of dwelling units
- Clarify application of accessibility requirements in NBC 3.8.

**The process is the same as for all other proposed code changes**

Costs and benefits described in individual PCFs

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# NBC framework: Houses no longer 100% exempt from accessibility

PCF 1880, 1881, 2028 (Winter 2024 PR)



- Accessibility objectives:
  - Exemptions for houses are removed
- Application of accessibility req's:
  - New subsections:
    - 3.8.4. (adaptability) – houses & MURBs per AHJ
    - 3.8.5. (visitability) – MURBs per AHJ
- Dwellings still exempt from accessibility req's for public spaces



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# Adaptability: Wider home entrance for mobility aids

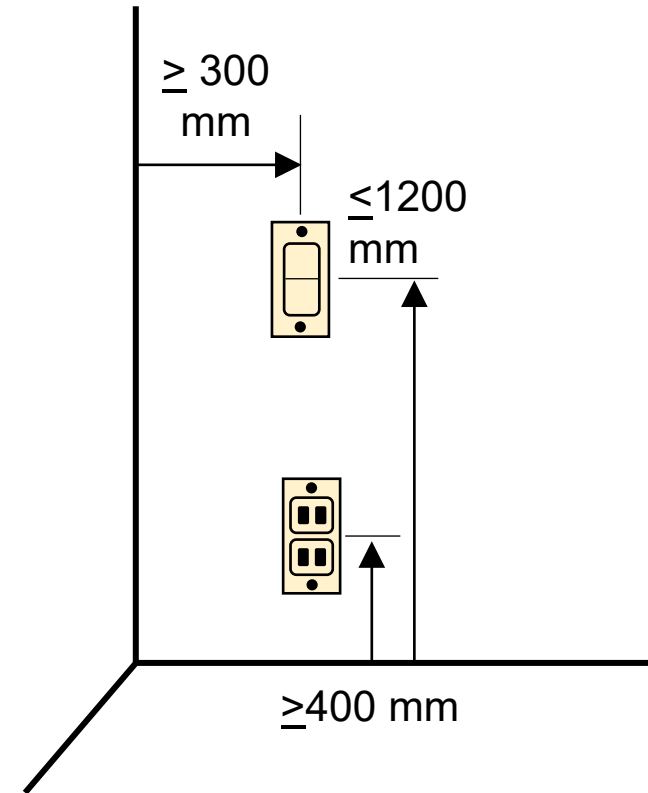
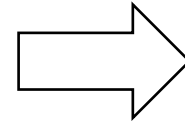
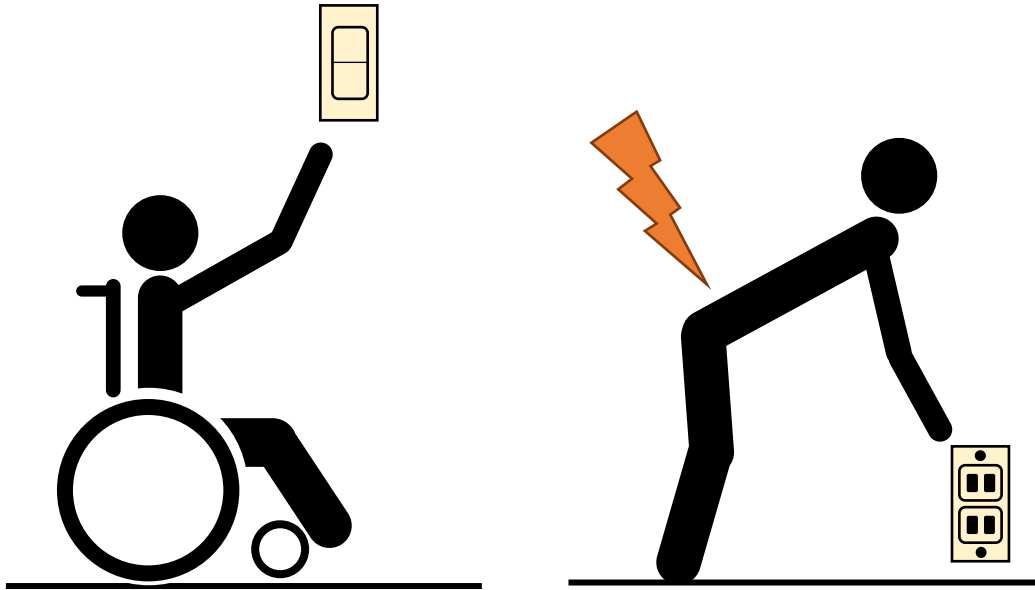
PCF 1883 (Winter 2024 PR)



- At least 1 entrance to the home needs a minimum clear width of 850 mm
- Can be any entrance

# Adaptability: Reachable controls

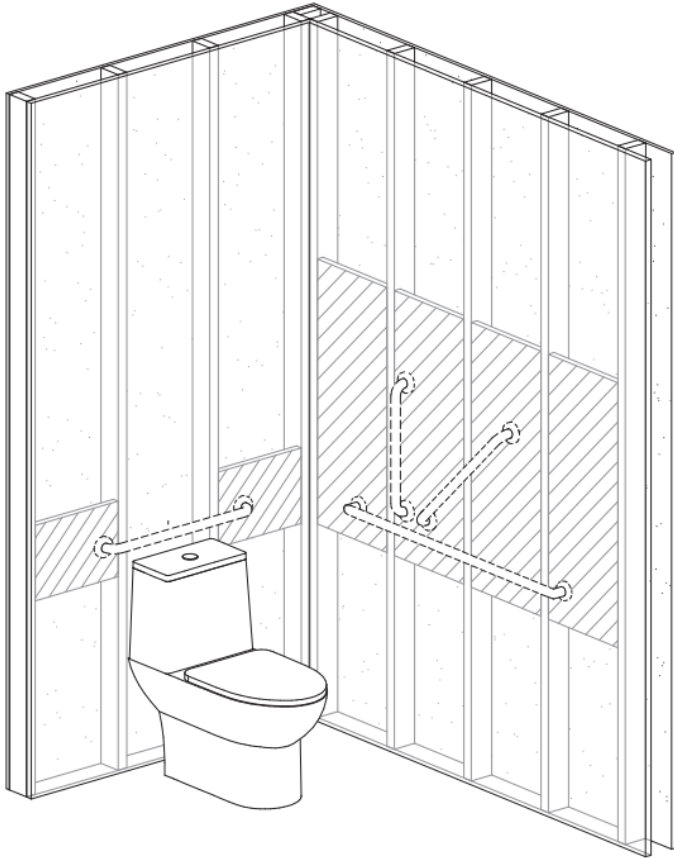
PCF 1957 (Winter 2024 PR)



Applies to **frequently-used** light switches, electric outlets & security systems

# Adaptability: Reinforcement to washroom walls for simplifying grab bar installations

PCF 2030, 2031, 1882 (Spring 2024 PR)



1. Structural strength requirements
2. Wall coverage around toilets
3. Wall coverage around bathtubs and showers

Applies only to stud walls

NOT a requirement for grab bars

# Adaptability: Structural strength requirement for reinforcement

PCF 2030 (Spring 2024 PR)



- Material and method of attaching to the studs must allow grab bars to resist 1.3 kN of horizontal and vertical force
- Any material that meets the structural strength requirement is acceptable
- Prescriptive options provided for wood; other materials forthcoming



# Adaptability: Minimum wall coverage around the toilet

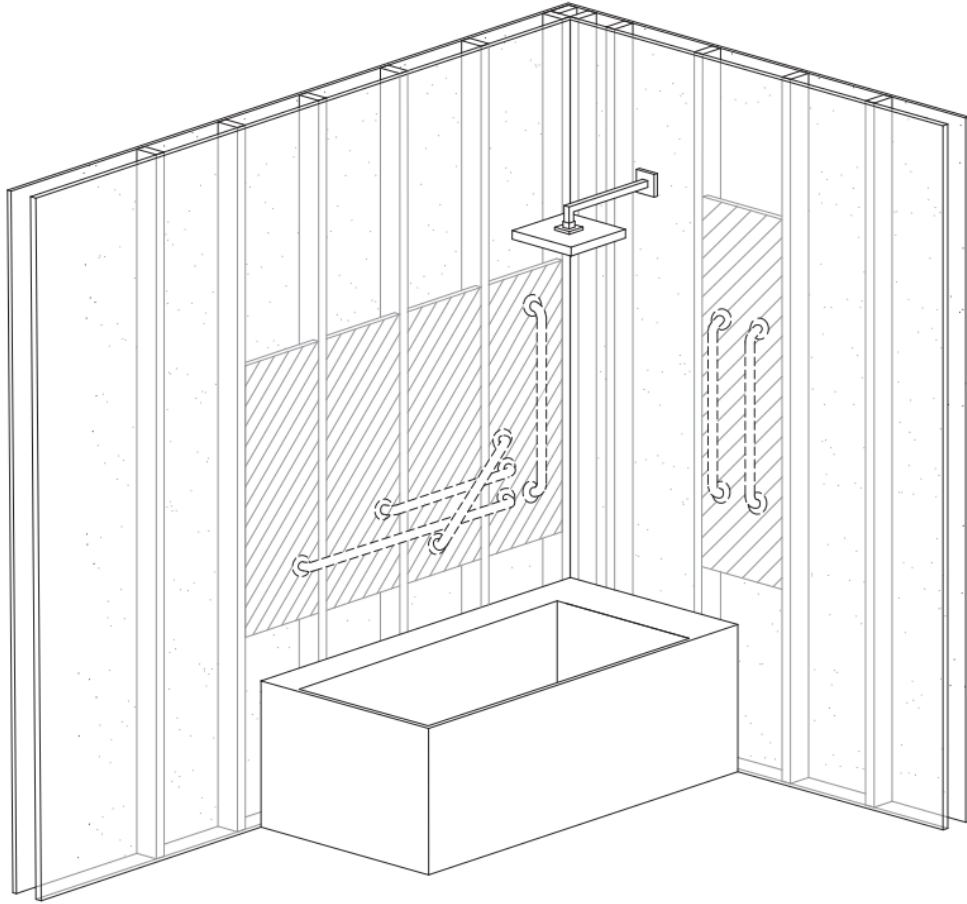
PCF 2031 (Spring 2024 PR)



- Reinforcement for grab bars beside and behind the toilet for toilet transfers
- Relaxations if:
  - the toilet centreline is  $>600$  mm from the wall
  - the wall of interest is too short or not present

# Adaptability: Minimum wall coverage around bathtubs and showers

PCF 1882 (Spring 2024 PR)



- Reinforcement for grab bars to support:
  - Entry and exit
  - Balance while standing
  - Transferring from a bath bench or the base of the tub
- Relaxations for:
  - Pre-fabricated enclosures
  - Tubs and showers that are not close to the wall

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- Adaptability req's
- Wider path to entry level living/ dining space\*\*
- 1 larger washroom\*\*

\*\* Spring 2024 public review (tentative)

# Visitability: Wheelchair access on the entrance level of the home

PCF 1884 (Spring 2024 PR)



- Path of travel to living spaces, dining spaces and a washroom on entrance level
  - Wider space
  - Low interior thresholds



# Visitability: Washroom with space to maneuver

PCF 1958 (Spring 2024 PR)



- Powder room on the entrance level with:
  - floor space (1.5 m diameter) for a wheelchair to turn
  - space between the sink and the adjacent wall
  - backing for grab bars (per adaptability requirements)

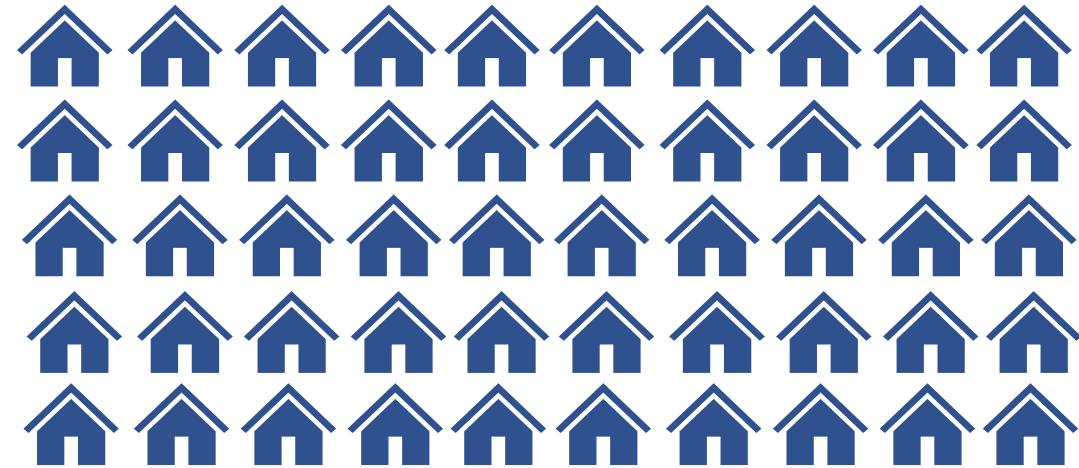
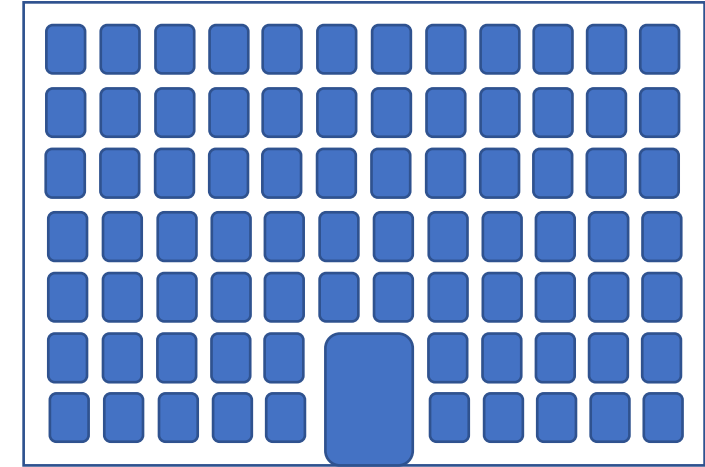
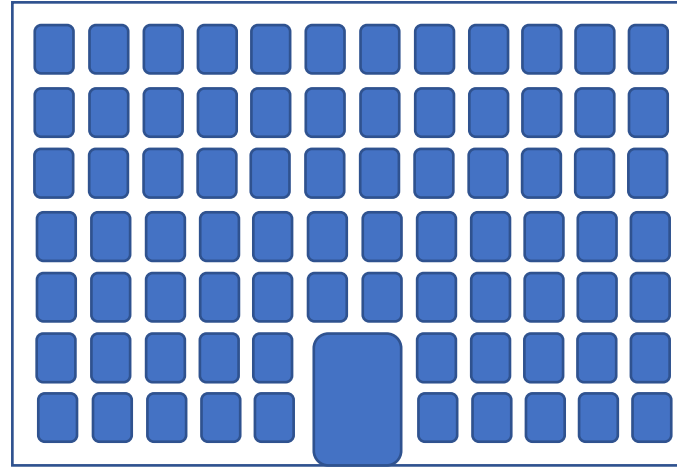
# Recap

- **Adaptable** means:
  - 1 wider door
  - Switches/plugs within reach
  - Backing for grab bars in washrooms
- **Visitable** means:
  - Adaptable + ...
  - 1m wide path in living/dining spaces
  - 1 washroom with 1.5m diameter floor space

- Accessibility objective can be applied to dwelling units in code provisions.
  - Does not mean dwelling units need to be accessible
- All detached houses, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, ..., need to be adaptable.
- AHJ decides how many units in MURBs will be adaptable
- AHJ decides how many of the adaptable units in MURBs will also be visitable

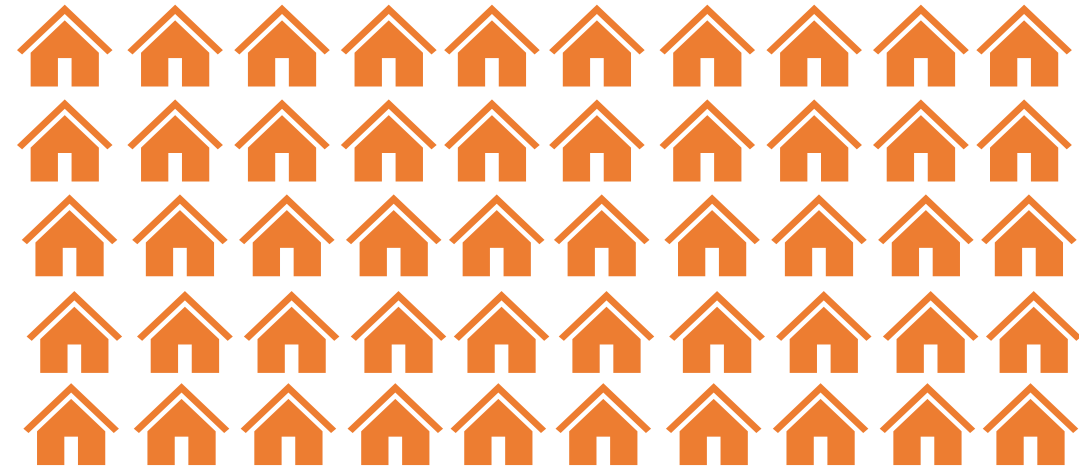
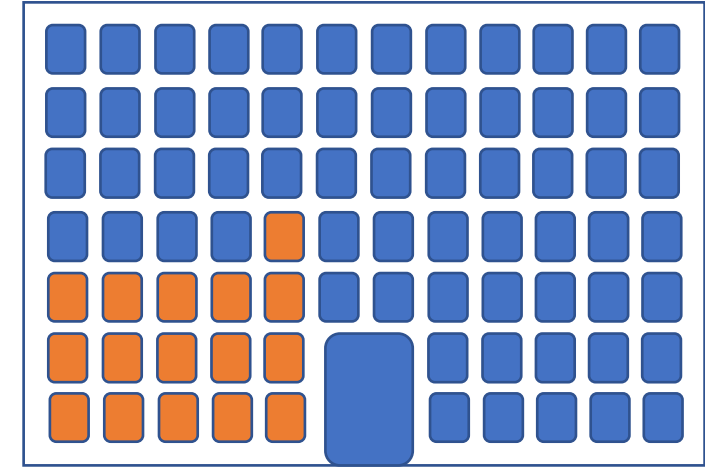
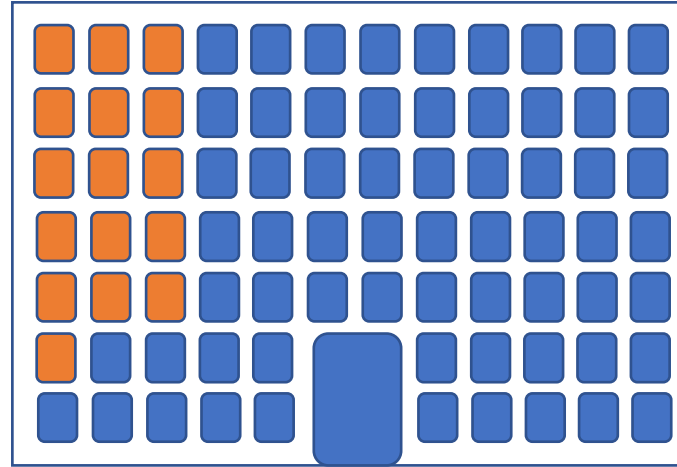
# Example

- AHJ decides that
  - 20% of MURB units need to be adaptable,
  - and 10% of units visitable
- Proposed development:
  - 50 detached houses
  - 2 MURBs, 80 units each



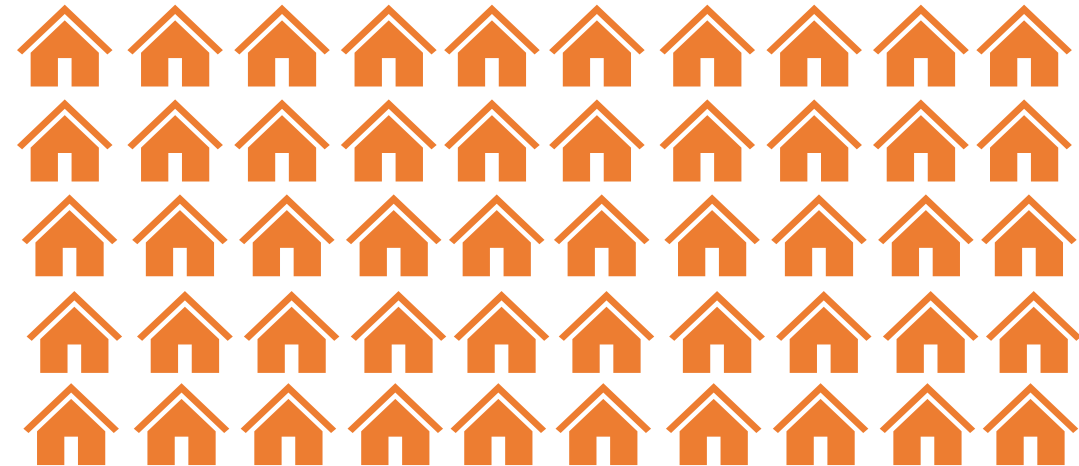
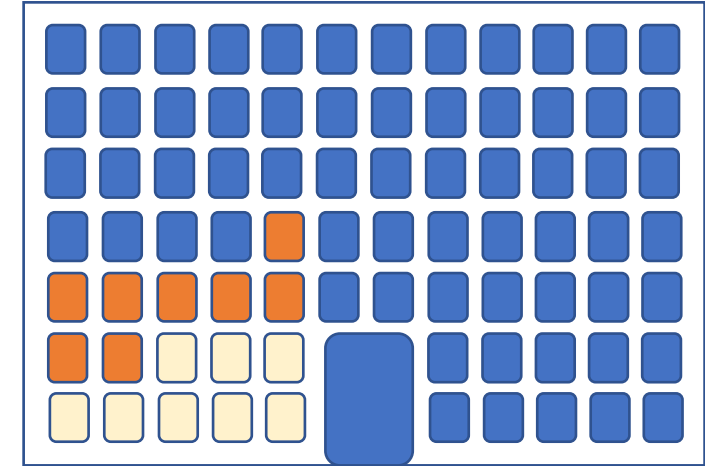
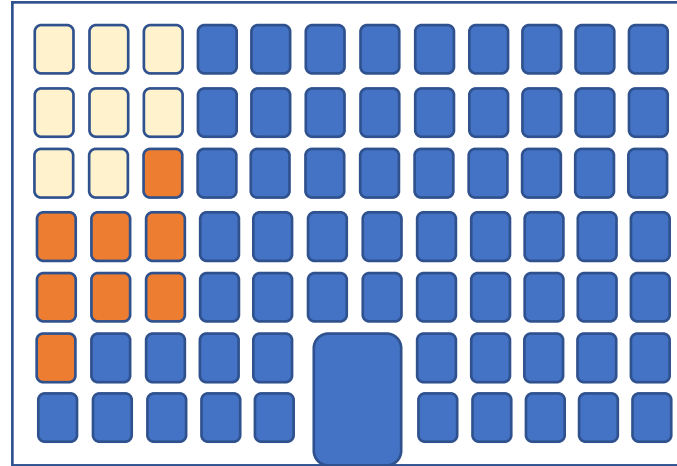
# Example

- 50 houses and 32 MURB units adaptable:
  - 1 wider door
  - Switches/plugs within reach
  - Backing for grab bars in washrooms
- 16 of the 32 MURB units are also visitable
  - 1m wide path in living/dining spaces
  - 1 washroom with 1.5m diameter floor space



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# CBHCC Strategic Priority: Accessibility

Preliminary proposal of development for the 2030 codes

Egressibility

Accessibility in Dwelling Units

Accessibility in Buildings

Grab Bars

*Subject to change as the Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes continues to develop the work plan for the 2025-2030 code cycle*

# Get involved!

Go to [www.CBHCC-CCHCC.ca](http://www.CBHCC-CCHCC.ca)

- Learn about upcoming code development system events and meetings
- Submit a code change request for consideration in work planning
- Comment on proposed change during an open public review
- Volunteer to participate on a code development committee



# Questions?

More info available on [www.CBHCC-CCHCC.ca](http://www.CBHCC-CCHCC.ca)

Download the codes here: [canada.ca/nrc-codes-canada-publications](http://canada.ca/nrc-codes-canada-publications)