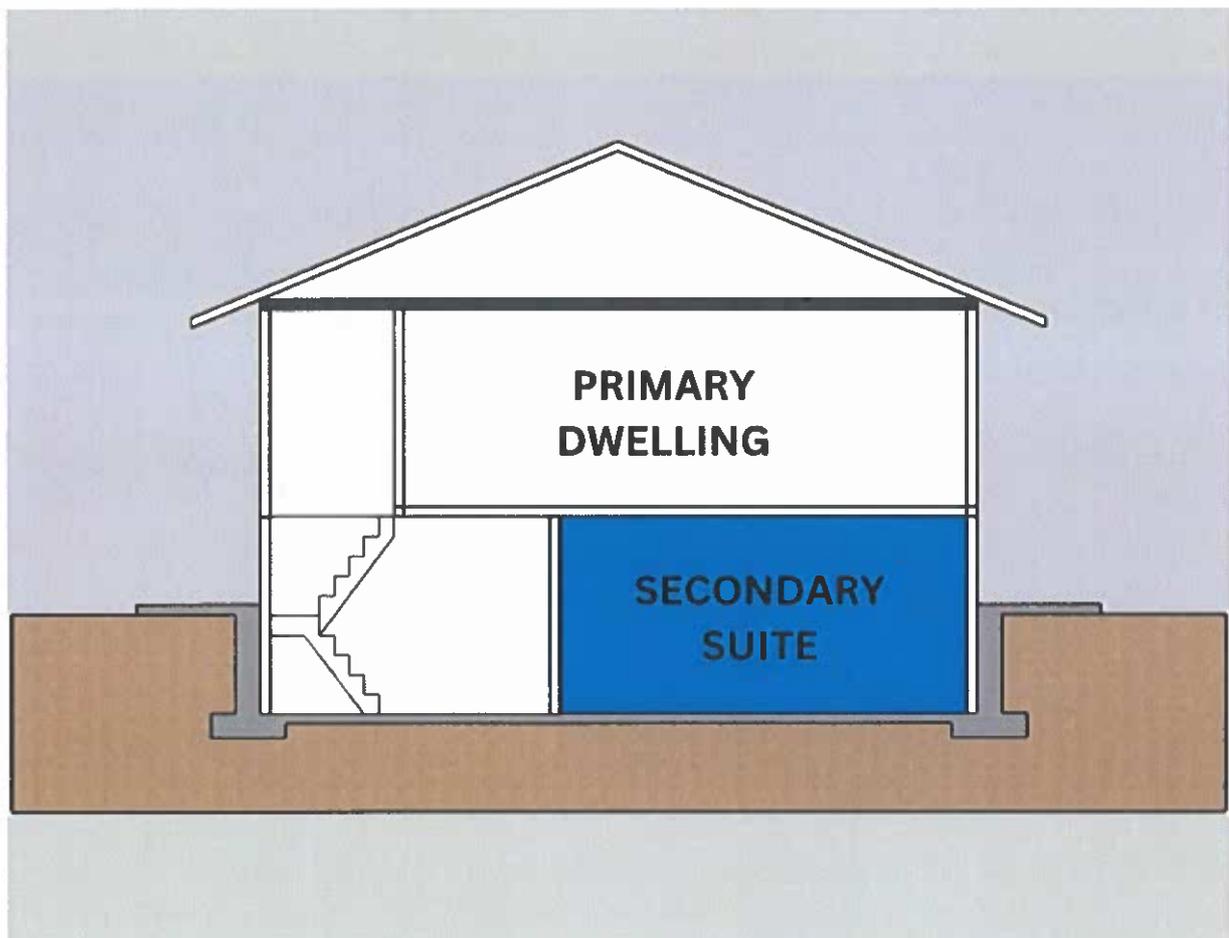




**Capital Region Service Commission
Commission de Services Régionaux de la Capitale**

A Guide to Secondary Suites

Have you recently discovered that your property's zoning may allow "secondary suites" in single-family dwellings? Secondary suites are a fantastic addition to the value of a property. Whether they are used as space for aging parents/grandparents or as a form of rental income, secondary suites are a reasonably affordable option for new and existing houses. This brochure highlights some of the requirements of a secondary suite set forth in the National Building Code of Canada.



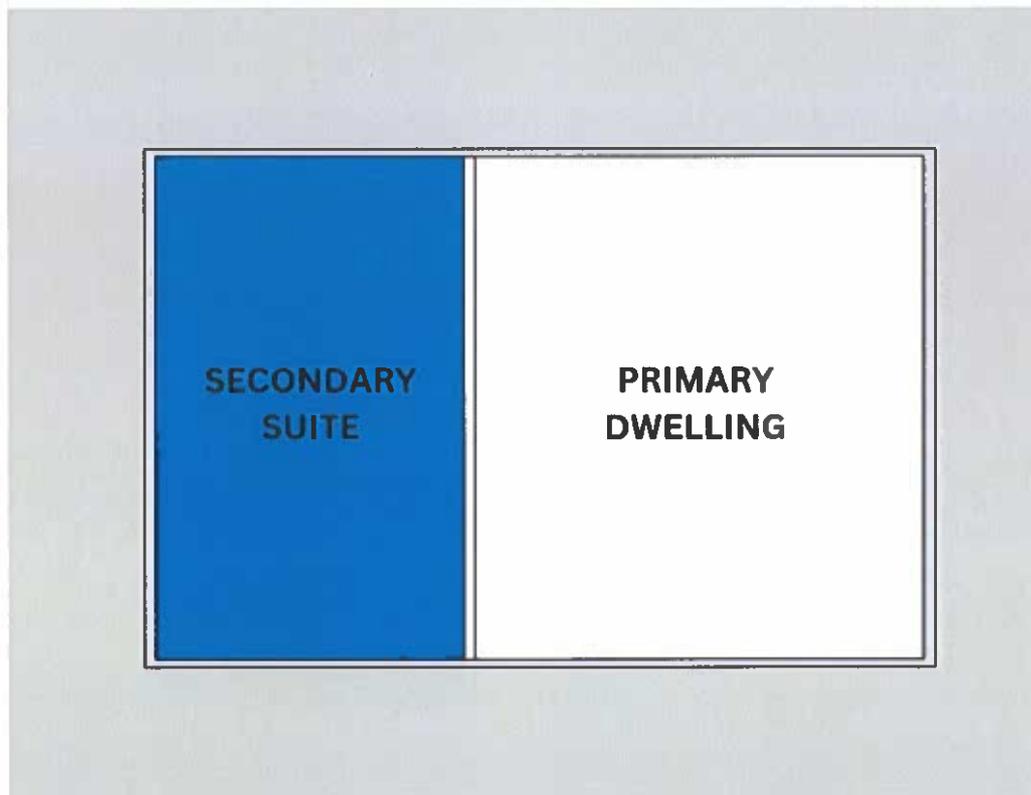
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It is important to note that a secondary suite is entirely different from a second unit. A second unit requires a fire separation between units, while a secondary suite requires a smoke-tight barrier without a fire-resistance rating.

The difference between a secondary suite and a second unit is contingent on a maximum floor area relative to the floor area of a given house, which is commonly referred to as the “80/80” rule. The NBC defines a secondary suite as having a “total floor area of all storeys” not more than “80% of the total floor area of all storeys of the other dwelling unit, excluding the garage floor area and common spaces serving both dwelling units” (9.1.2.1.[1][a]). However, the Code additionally sets a size limit on the suite as well, which is 80 m². Whichever of these two areas is lesser dictates the size of the secondary suite. These restrictions on size, as put forth by the Code, are meant to “retard the effects of fire on emergency egress facilities” (NBC Div A 3-1); similarly, the smaller size is the maximum allowed that prevents “persons being delayed in or impeded from moving to a safe place during a fire emergency” (NBC Div A 2-2).





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If you've determined that you want to accommodate for a secondary suite in your build or renovation and you are within the "80/80" rule, here are a few key elements that you will have to remember for the suite:

1: Smoke-tight Barrier:

Although a secondary suite does not call for a fire separation, a smoke-tight barrier is still required. This can be achieved with standard ½" drywall that has been taped and finished, for example. Similarly, exits are to be separated with a smoke barrier as well, meaning that the walls of an exit stairwell, for example, require ½" drywall on each side. (NBC 9.10.9)



2: Separate HRV/smoke dampers:

Due to the moisture index rating for Fredericton and surrounding areas (found in Appendix C of Division B of the NBC), every new residential dwelling requires an HRV/ERV. The same is required in a secondary suite. There are two ways to address this: One is to have a separate HRV installed within the secondary suite; the second is to use one HRV/ERV for both dwelling units, installing smoke dampers in the leads to prevent smoke from circulating throughout the entire building. (NBC 9.32.3.12)





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3. Safety requirements:

- Smoke/CO Alarms -installation of smoke and carbon detector requirements, for a secondary suite, are the same as they would be for a single-family dwelling, but the alarms must be interconnected to both dwelling units. (NBC 9.10.19 and NBC 9.32.3.9)



- Egress windows – all bedroom windows must meet minimum egress requirements of 0.35 m² (3.77 ft²). (NBC 9.9.10)
- Door separations – all doors separating the secondary suite from the primary suite and mechanical rooms require self-closing devices on a solid core door. (NBC 9.10.13)

4. Additional requirements:

- Contact a Development Officer for your local zoning by-laws.
- A building permit is required for all secondary suites.
- Contact your Justice and Public Safety department to confirm the on-site septic system, if the building is not on a public sewer system.

These are some of the most common questions owners have regarding secondary suites in a home. If you have further questions about code provisions related to secondary suites, please contact the Capital Region Service Commission's Building Inspection Department and one of the inspectors will be happy to answer your questions.