

Wood-Frame Construction Fire Safety Practices

Date:	February 2, 2015
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Ann Borooah, Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	PG15002

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to the Planning and Growth Management Committee's direction to the Chief Building Official to report on the need for Council to request that the province move forward with a framework to mitigate the risk of fire during the construction of combustible buildings. Since January 1, 2015, the Ontario Building Code has permitted the construction of wood-frame buildings of up to six-storeys.

This report recommends that City Council request that the Province of Ontario proceed swiftly with a stakeholder consultation on site safety practices during the construction of combustible buildings for Ontario, similar to the program in place in British Columbia.

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building recommends:

1. City Council request that the Province of Ontario consult expeditiously on a regulatory strategy to guide site safety practices during the construction of combustible buildings, and that the Chief Building Official, in consultation with the Fire Chief, report back to the Planning and Growth Committee on the status of this issue by the second quarter of 2015.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of January 8, 2015, the Planning Growth and Management Committee requested that the Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building report to the Planning and Growth Management Committee on the need for City Council to request that the province develop a regulatory framework to support fire safety during the construction of combustible buildings.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PG1.7>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Amendments to the Ontario Building Code came into force on January 1, 2015 allowing up to six-storey wood-frame buildings. Previously, wood-frame buildings were limited to four-storeys.

During the province's consultation process leading to the code changes, the City of Toronto and other stakeholders identified that the province needs to develop a framework to support fire safety during the construction of combustible buildings. In British Columbia, where this form of construction has been permitted since 2009, extensive regulations and practices have been developed to protect these buildings from fire during construction.

In Ontario, construction site safety is regulated by the Ministry of Labour, through the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). The Ministry of Labour inspectors enforce these regulations for the duration of a construction project. The province also has some authority to manage the issue under the Fire Prevention and Protection Act.

The Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community Safety and Correctional Services, and Labour have committed to work together with stakeholders and the City of Toronto, to support fire safety during construction. A provincial consultation on this matter is expected to take place in the near future, though the province has not provided any firm commitment, or timelines to date.

It is recommended that the Chief Building Official, in consultation with the Fire Chief, report back to the Planning and Growth Management Committee on the progress and results of these consultations.

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SIGNATURE

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