

Barn building industry is facing regulatory changes



Gary van Bolderen: “We never used screws, now we use them all the time.”

GARY VAN BOLDEREN RECALLS the agricultural building he built in the Dundalk area early in his construction career.

He never had a building permit and that was perfectly legal.

“That doesn’t happen anymore,” Bolderen said.

Speaking at the annual meeting and 40th anniversary celebrations of the Canadian Farm Builders Association, van Bolderen, a charter

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An updated national farm building code is expected to be adopted later this year

By John Miner

member of the association, recounted the substantial changes experienced by the agricultural construction industry over the decades.

“We never used screws, now we use them all the time. We used to think 40 foot trusses were a long span,” said Balderen.

Now barns are going up 100 feet wide and wider, he said.

The requirement for building permits for farm buildings came with



Will Teron: “What I can say is the finish line is now in sight.”

Ontario’s adoption of the National Farm Building Code of Canada.

Other big changes have come in health and safety.

“I can remember guys not wearing hard hats, hardly ever seeing a safety inspector. We didn’t have to have harnesses on to climb a roof to put steel up. You didn’t have to be trained to run a zoom boom,” he said.

While people in the industry might have found some regulations to be a

pain, they happened for a reason - to make the job site a safer place, van Bolderen said.

The CFBA has been a part of that process, participating in meetings and making submissions, he said.

“It has made us a better industry, a safer industry. When your son or daughter goes to work you know they are going to come home,” said van Bolderen, who started Dutch Masters Design and Construction Services, a Barrie-based firm that concentrates exclusively on the construction of horse facilities.

More changes are coming for the industry in the years ahead with updates to the National Farm Building Code and the National Fire Code of Canada.

The CFBA has been lobbying the federal government since 2006 for an update to the national code.

Currently released in draft form for comment, it is expected to be adopted later this year as a section

of the National Building Code.

“What I can say is the finish line is now in sight,” Will Teron of Tacoma Engineers told the meeting.

Teron said the new code will continue to recognize the unique feature of farm buildings as structures with low human occupancy.

The farm building code update will allow construction of farm buildings of an unlimited area and up to three storeys of combustible construction.

It will also change ventilation requirements for farm buildings, including requiring liquid manure tanks below barns to be ventilated to control explosive risk with a minimum of two air changes per hour.

Designs for wind loads are being increased from a one in 10-year return period to a one in 50.

For fire protection, there will have to be access to all farm buildings for fire departments.

Fire separations will be required between service rooms, incinerators, drying facilities, repair garages and hazardous material storage.

It is also currently proposed that farm alarms be required for farm structures of two storeys or greater.

Overhead doors will no longer be acceptable as an exit door and in general two exit doors will be required.

The new building code will introduce seismic design requirements for buildings with standards varying depending on the amount of activity in an area.

The proposed new fire code will make electrical and mechanical inspections of farm buildings mandatory, including thermal imaging.

Teron said the national codes are designed as a model for other jurisdictions and will have to be adopted by the province before they take effect. That could be several years. ①

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