

Farm Building Code will get makeover January '25

It might precipitate a flurry of building permit applications this fall

BY LISA BOONSTOPPEL
Ontario Farmer

Updates to the farm building code to match the National Building Code (NBC) 2020 will likely result in a rush of building permit applications this fall.

Farmers concerned about extra rules and contractors wanting to work to the old code will be eager to get their paperwork in place before the changes come into effect in January 2025.

However, the new code addresses some real issues including potential damage from wind, snow load and seismic activity, say members of the Canadian Farm Builders Association.

Speaking at the CFBA's annual meeting held April 23 in Stratford, Tyler Griffith of Tacoma Engineers and Bram Van den Heuvel of Stonecrest Engineering explained the farm building code is getting a makeover so it will harmonize with the NBC 2020 and make sense for the size and complexity of new farm buildings.

"There have been no significant updates since the original National Farm Building Code of Canada was made in 1995 while farm buildings have significantly changed," said Griffith.

New rules mean building costs will likely increase and the pair expect there will be a flurry of new farm building permit applications before the changes are expected to take place on Jan. 1, 2025.

"Implementation should be on that date but if you can demonstrate that you have a substantial design to date, you can discuss it with your local jurisdiction and can likely go ahead with the design. If you are not substantially complete, you may have to go ahead with the new code design."

"The authority having jurisdiction will not say on Jan. 3 and



Tyler Griffith of Tacoma Engineers (left) and Bram Van den Heuvel of Stonecrest Engineering spoke at the recent CFBA annual meeting

tell you that you have to make changes."

Years in the making, the proposed changes will affect large farm buildings that are more than 600 square metres in area and used for agricultural occupancies with low human occupancy.

Key changes relate to fire risk, egress, ventilation and geographic climatic loads (snow, wind and seismic).

Concerns have been arising about fire, structural, heating and ventilation performance of farm buildings. There are also concerns about the risk of explosion and flammability as well as conditions that create a hazard to life safety. Classified as Group G (agricultural), new farm builds will be broken down into G1 - G4 with G1 being High Hazard.

For instance, farm buildings with below floor manure storages are classified as G1, but with some special provisions.

In terms of fire protection, more fire separations will be required between farm building occupancy combinations. There are more rules regarding closures, firewalls and fire blocks along with tighter controls on electrical wiring and equipment requirements. These could include fire alarms and emergency lighting and signs to be installed at exits.

Doors that provide access to exits can no longer be overhead doors and new doors will have to swing in the path of travel. In general, two egress doors will be required from each room or floor area.

Access to buildings will also be closely reviewed as the fire department will require a street,

private roadway or yard to access farm buildings.

If hazardous substances are being stored in a farm building, exhaust ventilation systems will be required where there is potential for fire/gas/explosion hazards. "Liquid manure storage tanks below barn floors shall be ventilated to control explosive risk," said the pair.

"Not less than two air exchanges per hour allowed." There will also be specific requirements for pesticide stor-

age areas.

The structural design of large farm buildings will also see changes to conform to the NBC 2020 as well as subsurface investigating of the farm building site to check for soil bearing and conditions. This is typically done by a geotechnical engineer in the early stages of the project.

Due to the size and weight of modern machinery, barn structures will need to be able to bear higher loads.

Snow and wind have always been considered in farm building design but now seismic will also be considered. "Seismic design and new seismic categories will be in line with the NBC 2020 Part 4," said Griffith. Rules will depend on location, and a seismic site class will be used to determine if a seismic analysis is required to build.

Since most barn fires are caused by an electrical source,

according to the pair, the NFC update will have more specification for wet and corrosive environments. Inspections and reports will be required and ongoing maintenance based on inspection report finding and recommendations will be expected.

Also tied in with the farm building code in the revamping of the Ontario Fire Code."

Other changes to make farm building codes comply with NBC 2020 include:

- changes to truss spacing
- more end wall studs/double studs and triple studs depending on the project
- backup power supply required for emergency lighting
- minimum snow load has been increased
- increase in wind load
- recognition of mezzanines
- new fire protection and occupancy safety requirements

Ag committee probes complaints about threatened witnesses

BY ALEX BINKLEY
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Ottawa - The staff of the Commons agriculture committee is looking into reports that potential witnesses would not testify about a bill to ban the export of live horses for slaughter because of threats made against them.

The committee agreed unanimously to have the clerk and analysts prepare a brief report related to the reports of threats, harassment and intimidation against and efforts to deter the appearances of potential witnesses on the bill.

The staff report will only be given to the MPs on the committee to decide on what follow-up action should be taken, committee chair Kody Blois said. It will initially not be made public.

Conservative ag critic John Barlow proposed the study because he had never experi-

enced at a Parliamentary committee like what happened during the study of the horse ban bill. In addition to potential witnesses being harassed, MPs and their staff received quite disgusting emails.

"We had a number of witnesses who eventually decided not to appear at committee because of the intimidation and reaction they were getting in phone calls. A couple of witnesses had to call the RCMP on multiple occasions as a result of protests or intimidation at their farms or businesses."

The committee's study of the bill from Kitchener-Conestoga Liberal MP Tim Louis, which was approved and sent back to the Commons for final passage, "was unlike anything I've seen - having witnesses refuse to attend because of threats being thrown at them and the harassment they were having to endure from animal activists."

"This is very unfortunate. I

think that no matter where you stand on an issue, you should have your voice heard and feel free to have that voice heard."

One witness would only testify in camera

Barlow was supported by MPs from the other parties including NDP agriculture critic Alastair MacGregor and Bloc Quebecois MP Yves Peron who said it was "unacceptable for people to be intimidated when they are here to inform the public and defend their rights and interests, no matter who they are. We live in a democratic society."

Leah Taylor Roy, Liberal MP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, said she has seen bullying in relation to other bills and wondered if the study should be expanded if the committee does decide to report to the Commons.

"I think we do want to protect witnesses and make sure that people aren't bullied."