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Public review of national codes objectives

As part of the process of converting the National Code Documents (National Building Code, National Fire Code and National Plumbing Code) to objective-based form, the standing committees of the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) have devoted most of their efforts over the last three years to conducting a bottom-up analysis of the codes. In this analysis, the specific intent of each code requirement and the overall code objective(s) it is related to have been identified.

The analysis has made possible a clearer articulation of the objectives addressed by each of the National Code Documents. For example, although most of the requirements of the National Building Code (NBC) are related to safety, health and accessibility, some are not - the NBC clearly addresses other issues.

The Commission has reviewed the objectives that emerged from the analysis of each code, and has proposed that objectives concerned with issues other than Safety, Health and Accessibility be classified in two different categories:

1. Those that could be eliminated prior to the publication of the next edition of the codes in 2003, and
2. Those that would remain in the next edition of the codes but would then be examined in greater depth to determine whether they should continue to be addressed by the codes.

The public review on issues related to the National Code Documents will be co-ordinated with the provinces and territories so that those issues related to provincial/territorial variations are reviewed at the same time.

Two public review processes have been scheduled. The first one, which started on October 15 and finishes on January 15, will deal with the confirmation of the objectives of the codes and the proposed format for objective-based versions of the codes. The next public review, scheduled for mid-2002 will deal with the proposed technical changes to the 1995 codes and the then completed objective-based versions of the codes (with 1995 content)

During this fall's review the CCBFC is seeking code users' views on five issues related to the move to objective-based codes:

- The identification of the objectives of each code that have emerged from the bottom-up analysis of the codes.
- The proposed structure of the new codes
- The decision to move to objective-based codes
- The preparations required for implementation of objective-based codes
- The proposed change to a three-year code cycle.

An information package has been produced for the consultations, and will be distributed upon request. As well, seminars will be held across the country to explain the Commission's proposals for an objective-based format and for the objectives and structure of the new codes.

The consultations will be organised jointly with the provinces and territories, some of which have their own codes based on the national codes. Since the provincial codes sometimes include objectives not addressed in the national codes, code users' views on these additional objectives will also be sought.

In the past, such consultations have usually been held separately, at both the national and provincial/territorial level. The upcoming, jointly organised consultations signal the implementation of the new coordinated code development and review system. This system will involve the provinces and territories at every stage of code development so that when the new codes are published, there will be no surprises, hence adoption by the provinces and territories will be able to proceed more quickly than has been possible in the past.

Code users from provinces with provincial codes who have not participated in national consultations in the past are encouraged to do so this time. If you would like to receive the information package, please send us your name and address and indicate which of the three codes you are interested in.

By mail:

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By e-mail: codes@nrc.ca

For the latest information on the public consultations, go to

<http://www.ccbfc.org/ccbfc/tgs/obc/public.shtml> or go to <http://www.ccbfc.org> and follow the links.