

# Important building code changes for farm buildings

At the recent Canadian Farm Builders Association Conference, Gerald Moore, CEO of RSM Building Consultants, highlighted several updates to the Ontario Building Code that could significantly impact farm construction.

While some of these changes may appear minor, Moore emphasized that they can affect project costs, timelines, and approvals in a meaningful way.

## 1. Larger buildings may now require both an engineer and an architect

Moore noted that for farm buildings over 600 square metres, the code now appears to require both a professional engineer and an architect.

“In the past, we’ve designed these buildings with engineers alone,” Moore explained. “This change caught a lot of people off guard.”

This could mean:

- Higher design costs
- More coordination between professionals
- Potential delays if requirements aren’t clarified early

Moore suggested the wording may have been unintended, but stressed that municipalities are likely to enforce it as written.

What this means for you: Moore recommends confirming with your local municipality early in the process whether both professionals will be required.

## 2. New ventilation requirements

According to Moore, another important update is that large farm buildings must now meet stricter ventilation rules under the code.

“This puts more responsibility on the design side to ensure air quality requirements are being met,” Moore said.

This may involve:

- More detailed ventilation system design
- Review by a qualified professional (typically a professional mechanical engineer)

What this means for you: Moore advises farmers to expect additional attention—and possibly cost—related to ventilation in larger buildings.

## 3. Doors may need to swing outward

Moore also pointed to changes requiring exterior doors to swing outward (in the direction of exit).

“In high-occupancy buildings, that makes perfect sense,” Moore said. “But farm buildings typically have very low occupant loads.”

He acknowledged practical challenges such as:

- Snow and ice blocking doors
- Equipment or materials restricting movement

Moore noted that some municipalities are accepting alternative solutions, while others are not.

What this means for you: Moore recommends discussing door swing early with your municipality—either plan for outward-swinging doors or agree on an alternative approach before construction begins.

## 4. No clear rule right now for building separation

Moore also highlighted that previous guidance recommending about 30 metres between farm buildings to reduce fire risk is not clearly included in the current code.

“That requirement used to be there, and now it’s not,” Moore explained. “Right now, the reality is the law isn’t in place.”

While this may offer flexibility, Moore cautioned that it also introduces risk.

What this means for you: Moore recommends

continuing to follow reasonable building separation practices, even if they are not explicitly required, to reduce fire risk and avoid future complications.

## Final thoughts

Moore emphasized that even small wording changes in the code can have major impacts.

“The court doesn’t care whether we think it’s a good change or a mistake,” Moore said. “They look

at what the legislation actually says.”

Moore’s advice to farmers:

- Speak with your municipality early
- Confirm requirements before finalizing plans
- Work with qualified professionals familiar with current code changes

Taking these steps upfront, Moore noted, can help avoid costly delays and complications down the road.

		
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