



Basement Suite

What is a Legal Suite?

A legal suite in Fort St. John meets the following criteria:

- > The suite is located in a single detached dwelling or within an accessory building on the same parcel as a single detached dwelling that is appropriately zoned (suites are not legal in duplexes).
- > There is only one suite on the property and there are no boarders or a bed and breakfast being operated.
- > The maximum floor area of the suite must not exceed the lesser of 90sq m (approx. 30 feet by 30 feet), or 40% of the gross floor area of the principle building.
- > The suite meets BC Building Code requirements for secondary suites.
- > The owner of the suite holds a valid business license issued by the City.
- > One parking space is provided on the parcel for the tenant(s).
- > The owner of the property occupies the residence.

What if my suite does not meet all the criteria?

If you have a suite in the residence you own, there are steps you can take to conform to the City bylaw. If your current zoning allows for a suite you can do the following:

- > Contact the City to confirm that building permits were issued for the suite.
- > If there is no building permit, staff will work with you to assist you in determining how best to legalize your suite.
- > Contact the City to obtain a business licence.
- > Book an inspection with a City Building Inspector who will verify the suite meets BC Building Code (\$200 fee).
- > If it does not meet Code, the owner will be responsible to obtain the necessary permits and make the required renovations and arrange for re-inspection.

If current zoning does not allow for a suite, the suite must be decommissioned.



What if I don't want to keep the suite?

You can decommission the suite by doing the following:

- > Remove upper kitchen cabinetry and re-finish the walls.
- > Remove both stove and stove electrical outlet. Wiring must be disconnected from the electrical panel by a certified electrician. Proof of the work must be provided.
- > Remove separation between suite and principle living area – there may not be two independent living areas. Remove the door between living spaces, framing, interior locking mechanisms, refinishing as walk through style opening.
- > If there is no access to the principle living area through the interior of the suite, access must be created in compliance with the BC Building Code.
- > Contact the City to arrange for a Building Inspector to conduct an inspection to confirm removal of the suite (\$200 fee) within 12 months.

When do I have to deal with this?

The City is planning to work with home owners to ensure their compliance in stages.

1. January 15, 2015 Bylaw Enforcement Officers and City Inspectors will begin working with owners of duplexes with suites.
2. March 2, 2015 Bylaw Enforcement Officers and City Inspectors will begin working with owners of single family homes with suites.
3. Enforcement actions against owners of non-conforming properties may begin April 1, 2015.

Its about:

**Your safety
Your investment
Your neighbourhood
Our community**

Why do I care?

Secondary suites that are not legal could be a concern for owners:

- > Suites may not be safe if they do not meet the BC Building Code and if they are not known to emergency personnel. In the event of an emergency everyone needs to get out safely.
- > Mortgage insurance may not be valid in illegal suites with significant financial consequences.
- > Insurance may not cover all repairs in the event of damage to the dwelling.

Protect your investment and ensure your suite is legal!

Why do my neighbours care?

Secondary Suites impact neighbourhoods:

- > Additional residents mean more vehicles.
- > Additional vehicles parked on the roads create challenges for snow removal and emergency vehicle access.
- > More residents in a house can mean more garbage piled on the curb on garbage day and an unsightly street.
- > Over crowded streets also make a neighbourhood appear less desirable and can impact real-estate value.
- > Neighbourhood planning involves estimating the number of people using City services. Additional unplanned residents put increased pressures on infrastructure like water and sewer lines.

Where can I find more information?

City Bylaws:

www.fortstjohn.ca/bylaws

Building Permits:

www.fortstjohn.ca/building-inspection

BC Building Code:

www.bccodes.ca

City of Fort St. John:

Call us. We would be happy to answer your questions

10631 - 100 Street
Fort St. John, BC V1J 3Z5
250.787.8150
info@fortstjohn.ca

Report an illegal suite:

250-787-8150

illegalsuite@fortstjohn.ca



Secondary Suites

A Guide for Legal Secondary Suites in the City of Fort St. John

