



Tall Wall Guidelines

Current Status Due to 2020 National Building Code (Alberta Edition)

BACKGROUND / OVERVIEW

In 2016, BILD Alberta commissioned an engineering firm to prepare *Guidelines for the Construction of Residential Tall Walls*. Through issuance of a variance, the Government of Alberta permitted builders to use this document in lieu of having engineer certification for each individual design.

Use of this document has varied across the province. Builders in Calgary and Edmonton largely kept using a structural engineer to design specific tall wall details since the document was unable to cover every situation. Builders in small to mid-sized cities (Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer) use this document on almost every new home.

Changes under the 2020 National Building Code (Alberta Edition) made the previous Tall Wall Guidelines non-compliant with current code. BILD Alberta's Provincial Residential Technical Committee attempted to have the Tall Wall Guidelines updated but engineering firms were unwilling to certify a new document. Engineering firms have encountered issues of liability with the Tall Wall Guidelines (and generic engineering documents in general) and as a result, were unwilling to certify an updated document.

Members remain disappointed with this change as it can add approximately \$800 in new cost per home. BILD Alberta is engaging Municipal Affairs in an attempt to find a more cost-effective solution, however, there are no clear solutions at the present time. If a cost-effective solution is identified, we will share it with members as soon as possible.

CURRENT ALTERNATIVES

Through the Provincial Residential Technical Committee, we have gathered some preliminary feedback / suggestions on alternatives:

- *We engage a local structural engineer on each build involving a tall wall. Cost is generally in the range of \$800 per build.*
- *We no longer install tall walls at all, alternatively we do a stacked wall and engineer it. The safety codes department at the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has not had any issue with stacking walls, provided that it is engineered.*
- *We will likely start using the LVL supplier to engineer the work. Using LVL materials in those walls has advantages but it will be an added cost.*
- *In cases where the guide didn't work, our lumber supplier as had their LVL supplier engineer the tall wall, they have been quick on the ones we have done. The cost been ranged from \$125 to \$200 per plan so there is that option if your buying their products.*
- *Builders could work with their local Authorities Having Jurisdiction to create a city-wide variance.*