



Building Standards

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What is a tiny house?

There's no exact definition, but it generally refers to:

- Small. Generally <400 sq ft, but frequently <200 sq ft.
- Built for year-round living.
- Energy efficient. This is partly just because of the size.
- Sometimes off-grid.
- Nicer design and sturdier construction than RVs.
- More personalized to individual needs and taste.

The best known type, the tiny house on wheels, can be moved relatively easily. This means that buying a tiny house can be separate from buying land, which makes it possible to buy a house in stages and avoid carrying a debt. It also makes it easier to relocate when a job moves. One challenge is that there are no clear standards for tiny houses. **There are at least 6 different standards that could be applied to tiny houses. None of them fit very well.**

Recreational Vehicles: CSA Z240RV

This includes vehicles with an engine (like a bus) or trailers.

- Size: Narrow enough (<=2.6m, or 8.5') and short enough (12.5m, or 41') so they can be moved without any special permit.
- Foundation: Wheels
- Construction: The standard assumes it is built in a factory.
- Insulation: None, so while it's possible to make an RV that is warm enough for the winter, most municipalities don't allow winter occupancy of something with just an RV certification.
- Builders: Several Tiny House builders follow this standard, since mostly focuses on basic fire safety it's quite easy to comply with.

Park Model Trailers: CSA Z241

- Like RVs, but larger so are generally not frequently moved.
- Size: Wider than normal vehicles (>2.6m, or 8.5') but generally still legal on roads (<3.2m, or 10.5' wide). Up to 50m² (584 sq ft). They need a special permit to transport which costs \$10-15 per municipality you want to travel through, although some municipalities will refuse to grant one for a tiny house.



Manufactured Homes (sometimes called a Mobile Home): CSA Z240MH

Much closer to a real building standard.

- Size: Up to 3.2x21.9m (10.5'x72') or 70m² (754 sq ft)
- Foundation: Wheels or flat bottom that is moved to an existing foundation.
- Construction: The standard assumes it is built in a factory.

There are only three companies that can certify a Manufactured Home:

- Intertek
- Quality Auditing Institute (QAI)
- Canadian Standards Association (CSA) itself

Compliance involves certifying the factory, so it's really set-up for companies making 100 identical homes, rather than a person building their own home.

- Insulation: Suitable for winter. Depending on where it's located R17-22 walls, R22-39 roof.
- Builders: Few. E.g.
 - West Cost Outbuildings
 - Tiny Living Homes <http://www.tinylivinghomes.com>
 - Green Terra Homes <http://greenterrahomes.com>

Modular Homes

Like Manufactured Homes, but in multiple pieces that are assembled at site.

Building Code

E.g. National, BC, or Vancouver Building Code

- Size: None. Only the Ontario Building Code specifies minimum areas for rooms, the other building codes only specify room heights and minimum widths for doorways and hallways.
- Insulation: R17 walls, R40-60 roof (for BC building code, depending on location).
- Construction: On-site only.
- Builders: Many.

Municipal zoning

- Size: Generally specifies a minimum size (>700 or even >1000 sq ft are pretty common).

Note: These are based on a preliminary review of the standards.



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