

Equipment and Insulation Specifications Updates

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Introduction

Administration reviews each HELP retrofit project against a set of requirements. While eligible retrofits are outlined in the HELP Bylaw (No. 9827), the specific requirements or specifications are not. Proposed changes to the specifications for the eligible projects planned for implementation this year will align with the latest EnerGuide audit recommendations and required Canada Greener Homes (CGH) project specifications. The insulation requirements for specific attic types and exterior walls are being updated, and the minimum insulation value for basement slabs and crawl spaces is being defined.

Equipment and insulation specification changes only affect participants who have not yet signed a deferral agreement with the City of Saskatoon (City). Updating these specifications does not require an amendment to the *HELP Bylaw*.

Attic Insulation

When specifications for HELP were initially identified, the required attic insulation values were based on the requirements for a gable attic, which can accommodate many inches of blow-in insulation. However, many participants are also interested in insulating their cathedral ceilings or flat roofs, which do not have as much space as gable attics. Therefore, Administration is adding a minimum insulation value for upgrading insulation in cathedral ceilings or flat roofs. These values are based on CGH requirements and the 2015 minimum building code requirements and are outlined in Table 1. No change will be made for Gable attic spaces. If participants are unable to meet program specifications due to space limitations, administration will review and approve each case individually.

Table 1 – Attic Insulation Specification Changes

Attic Type	Current HELP Specs	Planned HELP Specs
Gable Attics	R-59.2	R-59.2
Cathedral Ceilings and Flat Roofs	None	R-28.5

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Exterior Wall Insulation

On January 1, 2024, Saskatchewan adopted the Tier 2 standard for energy efficiency outlined in the *National Building Code 2020 (NBC 2020)*. This code required a residential building to be built to a higher energy efficiency standard which is 10% more energy efficient than the previous building code. In February 2024, HELP administration updated the exterior wall minimum insulation value to reach R-19.5, an increase from R-17.5, to align with this code change. Administration plans to keep this requirement, even if the province rolls the code back to tier 1.

Any home built with 2x6 walls has an exterior wall insulation value of R-18.9. Setting a minimum value of R-19.5 does not effectively encourage participants who want to change their siding and add insulation in these homes, as they will only need to add R-0.6 when they could be adding more insulation for a similar cost.

For any exterior insulation upgrades, including siding replacement, administration plans to maintain the R-19.5 exterior insulation specification for homes with less than an effective R-value of R-18.9 and require homes with an initial insulation value of R-18.9 to add a minimum of 1" rigid insulation. Table 2 outlines the planned specification requirements. If participants are unable to meet program specifications due to space limitations, administration will review and approve each case individually.

Table 2 - Wall Insulation Specification Changes

Wall Location	Current HELP Specs	Planned HELP Specs
All Walls	R-19.5	R-19.5 & at least 1" of rigid insulation

Basement Insulation

The current HELP specifications have only one value for basement insulation, which is R-19.2. However, as projects have been reviewed, a lack of clarity has been noticed regarding the parts of the basement that can be upgraded and what those insulation values should be. Previous EnerGuide audits only categorized basement insulation as wall space and header space. These audits now include recommendations for basement slab and crawl space insulation.

Current program specifications lack clarity when retrofitting header spaces, basement slab, and crawl spaces. CGH outlines various locations within basement insulation and provides recommended insulation values for each. Administration will follow CGH's approach by listing the different spaces within the basement along with the minimum insulation value required by CGH's for each. Table 3 below outlines the changes, which are based on CGH's requirements.

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Table 3 – Basement Insulation Specification Changes

Basement Location	Current HELP Specs	Planned HELP Specs
Exterior Wall	R-19.2	R-22
Header	R-19.2	R-20
Slab	R-19.2	R-3.5
Crawl Space	R-19.2	R-24

Considerations

A *HELP* bylaw amendment is not required to update program specifications. The new technical specifications for attic, exterior wall, and basement insulation will be communicated to HELP participants starting June 1, 2025, and will only be implemented for participants who have not yet submitted a funding request by this date. Any participant projects already in progress will not be affected by the implementation of these updated specifications.