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PCS 103:26 Companion

AHJ Adoption Guide

How a Canadian Municipality Can Adopt PCS 103:26 Without Overshooting

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Informative Companion to PCS 103:26 (Voluntary Guidance)

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Purpose of this Guide

This guide is an informative companion to PCS 103:26, Model Municipal Provision for Helical Pile Permitting. It does not change any requirement of that provision. It is written for the building official or authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) who is considering adopting PCS 103:26, and its single purpose is to help a municipality adopt the provision at the right level: clear and defensible, without overshooting into requirements that add cost and delay without adding safety.

PCS 103:26 is deliberately proportionate. Most of the ways it can go wrong in practice come not from the text itself but from how a municipality adopts it: collapsing the flexible parts into blanket mandates, or never using the off-ramps the provision provides. The points below identify those choices.

This guide addresses how to adopt PCS 103:26 at the right level. It does not address the procedural steps required to make a bylaw or policy legally effective, which vary by province and municipality and are summarized in Section 9. The governing provincial or territorial legislation and building code always prevail.

1 Keep Both Product-Acceptance Paths

PCS 103:26 Clause 5 provides two acceptance paths: a CCMC evaluation, or a sealed professional engineering evaluation for products without a CCMC listing. Keep both. Narrowing the provision to CCMC-only is the most common way an adoption overshoots: it freezes out specialty and high-capacity systems and new entrants, and it goes beyond what the leading Canadian municipal documents actually require. If a municipality wants additional assurance for non-CCMC products, the better tool is to require that they be used only in higher Application Classes with full geotechnical support and field review, rather than closing the path entirely.

2 Offer the Geotechnical Waiver, and Actually Use It

Clause 9 provides a structured, condition-based waiver of the site-specific geotechnical report for Class 2 work. Class 1 work is exempt from the geotechnical report by class under Clause 6.4 and does not need the waiver. The waiver is only useful if a municipality both adopts it and trains staff to apply it. An adoption that keeps the waiver on paper but defaults every Class 2 dwelling to a full geotechnical report is more conservative than much current Canadian practice for small dwellings, and it imposes cost on work that does not need it.

Publish a short internal note with worked examples of when the Class 2 waiver applies, so plan examiners apply it consistently. The waiver is never available for Class 3 work, and that limit should be stated plainly.

3 Pick One Verification Model

Clause 8.5 offers two verification models: engineer field review (the Canadian norm) or independent special inspection. Select one for adoption, or define clearly when each applies. Do not draft the local adoption so that both are required, which creates duplicate cost and confusion. Under either model, the verifier must be independent of the installing contractor.

4 Tune the Class 1 Threshold to Local Conditions

The Class 1 low pile-load threshold in PCS 103:26 is shown as a bracketed default of approximately 22 kN (5,000 lb) per pile. This is a value to confirm locally, not adopt blindly. Where local housing stock is light, a more conservative threshold of approximately 10 to 15 kN per pile may be appropriate; where alignment with established Prairie practice is desired, approximately 22 kN may be retained. Regardless of the number chosen, apply the Clause 6.3 occupancy limit: a pile supporting a normally occupied dwelling is Class 2 or higher regardless of pile load.

5 Treat Insurance Evidence as an Option

Clause 7.5 makes professional liability insurance evidence an option, not a default. For a larger municipality this is reasonable. For a small municipality with a limited pool of available engineers, requiring it can inadvertently reduce the number of practitioners willing to take on the work. If a municipality chooses to require insurance evidence, limit the requirement to Class 2 and Class 3 applications, where the consequence of failure justifies it, rather than applying it to a simple Class 1 deck.

6 Leave Temporary Works Out Initially

PCS 103:26 applies to permanent helical pile foundations. There may be a temptation to extend it to temporary shoring and staging. Resist this initially. Temporary works are better handled under separate temporary-works guidance. Extending the permitting provision to them at the outset adds scope and review burden without a corresponding safety benefit for the building foundations the provision is designed to address.

7 Set a Review Cycle

Municipal helical pile guidance in active Canadian jurisdictions is typically revised every two to five years, often following code-cycle changes, new product evaluations, or field experience. Set a review cycle of three to five years for the local adoption, and use it to adjust the Class 1 threshold and the waiver conditions based on actual outcomes and feedback. This keeps the adoption current without requiring continuous maintenance.

8 Province-Specific Note

This guide is written to be province-agnostic. Each adopting municipality should reconcile PCS 103:26 with its own provincial or territorial building code, which always prevails. The box below illustrates the kind of reconciliation involved, using Ontario as an example.

Example: Ontario (OBC) context

A municipality adopting PCS 103:26 in Ontario should reconcile it with the Ontario Building Code and the Professional Engineers Act framework rather than treating it as standalone. In particular: confirm the provision sits beneath the OBC and that the OBC prevails on any conflict; map the Clause 4 responsibility roles to the commitment and general review mechanisms used in Ontario practice; and confirm the product-acceptance paths against how CCMC evaluations are treated locally. Ontario municipal practice has historically had little dedicated helical pile guidance at the

bulletin level, so an adopting municipality is establishing local practice and should obtain its own legal and engineering review of the adopted text. The Class 1 threshold and the verification model should be set with reference to local housing stock and the resources of the building department.

This box is illustrative. Confirm all references against the current Ontario Building Code before adoption.

9 Municipal Adoption Procedures (Informative)

PCS 103:26 and this guide are technical documents. They do not prescribe the procedural steps a municipality must follow to make the provision legally effective, and those steps differ among provinces and local governments. Each authority having jurisdiction should follow its existing procedures for adopting or amending building bylaws and administrative policies, for example staff drafting, public notice where required, council readings and adoption, and any required provincial or ministerial approvals, and then use PCS 103:26 as the technical content referenced or incorporated in those instruments. The governing provincial or territorial legislation and building code always prevail.

In Summary

Adopt PCS 103:26 for its proportionality, not against it. Keep both product-acceptance paths, offer and use the Class 2 geotechnical waiver, pick a single verification model, tune the Class 1 threshold locally, treat insurance evidence as an option limited to higher classes, leave temporary works out at first, and set a three-to-five-year review cycle. Adopted this way, the provision gives predictable, defensible requirements that good contractors already meet, without overshooting what the National Building Code of Canada and the CCMC framework intend.

Comment on this guide and on PCS 103:26 may be submitted through pileconnect.com.