

Unification Initiative



National Home Inspector Certification Council Business Case for Nationalizing Private Home Inspection Sector



PROUD MEMBER OF
**Institute for
Credentialing
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OVERVIEW: *The NHICC strongly supports an open process initiative to undertake the development of a consensus standard by a Standards Committee which, in consultation with and by assembling the various home inspection stakeholders. The ultimate goal is to make it possible to establish and standardize residential home inspection practices for home inspectors in Canada. The standardization therefore is intended to set itself the objective of standardizing and improving the service and addressing inconsistencies in certification that currently exist while enabling the consumer to fully understand the scope of a home inspection.*

The Standards Committee will also ensure that these inspection practice standards are applicable to all categories of residential buildings and to all forms of ownership, including divided co-ownership and housing co-operatives.

This paper simply provides some input on how this might be accomplished.

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Executive Summary

Home inspection provides a critical service in helping consumers understand the condition of their home. Inadequate home inspections can lead to serious safety and financial risks for home buyers and increased pressure for home inspectors. Studies readily point to a high degree of variation in home inspection practices across associations and jurisdictions within Canada. This makes it difficult for home inspectors to always demonstrate that their services are thorough and add value to their customers. Recent drop of home inspections provides another challenge. Home inspectors and home inspection associations need to recognize that when the momentum changes, we have to make adjustments.

The effort to unify the private home inspection sector is a challenge that has a long history for over the past 20 years with support at the federal level by CMHC (Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation) and HRDC (Human Resource Development Canada). Although the outcomes and consultations with the home inspection sector completed successfully with what was identified as the “National Certification Program”, there remained competition between the associations to defend their purpose and chosen certification process. Even to this day too much divisiveness provides the inconsistency and flaw within the home inspection sector.

Ultimately the public as well as stakeholders often point to a greater uncertainty as to whether their homes have been properly inspected. These issues exist for a number of reasons including - inconsistencies in requirements for a proper home inspection (aka: walk-throughs), significant variation in the levels of certification and inconsistencies in the reporting requirements – just to name a few.

Furthermore, consider the fact that not all home inspectors are required to be licensed or certified, and conversely some inspectors have more expertise than others. Once again, indicating flaws or obvious gaps within the private home inspection sector. Simply home inspectors are required to perform their work in a competent, non-negligent fashion. Equally so, rigor and care are mandatory requirements to help ensure reasonable competency of the home inspector.

“The current B.C. home inspection licensing model is confusing for home inspectors and lacks credibility with consumers due to the variety and inconsistency of the standards currently in place.” (Inc., 2015)

The information provide in this report provides more detailed background and builds upon a pathway forward towards the goal of unifying the private home inspection sector. It may not provide all the answers, but is intended as stepping stones with the goal of not just unifying the sector, but also promoting more consistency and standardization. Finally that will lead to increased consumer protection and a better-defined home inspection service to stakeholders.

**We look forward to your help and support to attest that we are truly a unified “profession”.
Let’s start by building a coalition NOW!**

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1 BACKGROUND

The NHICC believes that unifying the private home inspection profession around “common goals” and a “common national standard”. It is needed, not just by ALL members of the profession, but also by a number of stakeholders in the Canadian housing, real estate and financing community. Most importantly standardization will be beneficial to “consumers”.

In 1996 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) recognized that the Canadian home inspection profession was fragmented and offered little protection to the consumer. They conducted an in-depth study into the profession, and in 1997 their results were published. This was followed by the largest examination of our profession ever conducted. This National Initiative was known as CHIBO (Canadian Home Inspector & Building Officials). [\(Link\)](#)

This initiative involved Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), The Construction Sector Council (CSC) *now Build Force Canada*, the Alliance of Certified Building Officials’ Associations (ACBOA), First Nations National Building Officers Association (FNNBOA), the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), provincial and municipal governments, as well as representation from major financial, insurance, and legal establishments, and representatives from the various Canadian home inspection associations. The direct result of this study was the creation of the “National Certification and Accreditation Model for Canadian Home and Property Inspectors”. [\(Link\)](#)

The National Initiative took close to 8 years to complete with costs nearing two million dollars (\$2,000,000.00). This structure became known as “*The National Certification Program*”.

Key outcomes of the program were:

- 1) **Consumer Protection**,
- 2) ***A guideline*** to implement licensing,
- 3) A program that was open and available to any Canadian Home Inspector,
- 4) **Elevation of the status** of the Canadian home and building inspection profession in the minds of consumers, home inspectors, building officials, government and key stakeholders
- 5) **Establishment of minimum national occupational standards**, code of ethics and criteria for inspector certification so that the general public can have confidence that all certified inspectors meet the requirements of the national certification process
- 6) **To ensure** that inspectors comply with the **same performance standard** throughout Canada
- 7) **To approve**, support and coordinate provincial/regional accrediting bodies to administer, certify and provide disciplinary control of private home inspectors.
- 8) The **National Occupational Standards** (for education and training) was also a direct product of this initiative, sponsored by HRSDC, CMHC, and ACBOA.

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NOTE: Any reference in this document to ‘Home Inspector’ refers to members of the ‘Private Home Inspector’ sector.

In 2005 the Federal Government provided additional funding in the amount of \$250,000.00 to launch a “pilot project” to ensure the National Certification Program fulfilled the above criteria, contained rigor, verification, technical background review and was auditable. Over 100 applicants completed the initial certification process and gained the designation NCH (National Certificate Holder), which included a comprehensive background review and a practical field test - TIPR (Test Inspection with Peer Review).

The pilot project was analyzed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada’s respected leader in housing research and their review and support ensured its creditability and completeness.

The National Certification Program was established to allow home and property inspectors to be tested and before certified as competent and qualified professionals. The National Certification Program was entrusted to CAHPI National who later abandoned this very successful program in 2010.

Currently the National Certification Program is managed and administered under licensing agreements with CMHC and Build Force Canada by the National Home Inspector Certification Council (NHICC). The NHICC adheres to conformity with the Standards Council ISO/CAN-P-9 standards 17024.

“As mentioned previously, the national certification and accreditation models developed for this project have been built using the criteria defined in the CAN-P-9 Standard. The CAN-P-9 Standard (General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons) is based on the international ISO standard ISO/IEC 17024 and is published by the Standards Council of Canada,” (Council, 2005)

The NHICC was formed in 2010 and is a federal not-for-profit corporation, initially comprised of individuals elected under the designation National Home Inspectors (formerly NCH – National Certificate Holder) from all provinces. Under the current corporation model three (3) primary directors manage the NHICC. Regional representatives act in the role of director/advisors from each province/territory. In addition the Board is complemented with two public members at large and a director for Professional Practices.

The NHICC is strictly an “independent not-for-profit certification body” for home inspectors.

The NHICC maintains membership in ICE, (Institute for Credentialing Excellence), and retains a credentialing specialist on staff. This accomplishment validates custody of the essential knowledge to develop, implement, and maintain a quality certification program, the baseline requirement for accreditation bodies.

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The NHICC provides a singular vital, responsible authority to deliver “uniformity” of qualifications of practitioners. Thus providing more consistency required for a home inspection and baseline qualification for a home inspector.

CAHPI was instrumental in the development of the National Occupational Standards for Home Inspectors in 2001. Since that time there have been several updates including one in 2014 that was undertaken with a wider range of home inspection participants than those previously conducted with limitations by CAHPI.

The purpose of this report is not to deregulate, but to provide another perspective on the overall lack of uniformity in the home inspection sector. Even the apparent lack of worker transfer from one unregulated province or territory to one that is regulated with a similar designation at face value can be identified as a restriction on competition. Is this simply deemed as anti-competitive? Although regulating a sector such as the home inspection profession is intended to help protect consumers of this service, even where regulations do exist there’s a lack of uniformity within the regulations from province to province.

2 CREDENTIALING OVERVIEW

Credentialing is an authority term used to refer to concepts such as professional certification, certificate programs, accreditation, licensure, and regulation.

What is the Difference?

Credential. A credential is issued by a third party with authoritative power, and is proof of an individual’s qualification or competence in a given subject.

Certification. Certification is a formal process that recognizes and validates an individual’s qualifications in a certain subject. (ANAB, 2021)

Autonomy in the management and administration of certification protects certification programs from undue influence thus promoting excellence and professionalism of the home inspection sector. Autonomy is required in order for certification programs to serve stakeholder interests, primarily those of consumers of professional services.

The National Certification Program was based on the governance and structural elements defined in CANP-9 Standard (Criteria for Accreditation of Personnel Certification Bodies). National certification can be built on fulfilling the criteria outlined in the standard. The elements of this are incorporated, managed and delivered by the NHICC.

The National Certification Program was planned to be available and attainable by any home/property inspector in Canada, no matter what affiliation he or she may have. One of the downfalls of the previous administration, (CAHPI National), was that it required that individuals

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must be members of a CAHPI provincial association. This gave a CAHPI provincial organization the right to determine if a home inspector could become a National Certificate Holder.

The NHICC certification program is structured and governed in ways that are appropriate for a profession and demands requisite skill that ensure autonomy in decision making over essential certification activities. Thus the NHICC Council and the Certification Committee are responsible in maintaining decisions compliant with ISO-certification.

The mission of the NHICC is to “recognize individuals qualified in home inspection and to promote high inspection standards, including standards of care in this field.” Ultimately the goal is raising the certification bar for “consumer protection” – **nationally!**

Equally so, recertification is valuable for all certification programs. Demonstrating continuing competence through a variety of recertification mechanisms is in the best interests of both the public as well as the home inspection sector. Very few if any home inspection associations require recertification of their members to ensure continued competency.

Professionalism is not always well guaranteed – or perhaps, narrowly so.

Far too often home inspection associations get hung up with the numbers game aiming to be the biggest and most prominent group. At the NHICC we believe in the value of “quality” rather than focusing on quantity to ensure defensibility of a professional.

“It is not appropriate to require individuals who are within the National Certification Program to be members of a CAHPI provincial association, because this requirement would give a provincial association the power to determine whether or not an individual should be within the National Certification Program. This power must remain with the National Certification Council.” (Council, 2005)

3 CURRENT CREDENTIALING PROVIDERS

“It is important to note that National Certification and Provincial Certification are two different things.” (CHIBO II Project, 2005)

A knowledge gap exists between consumers and professionals that results in consumers being, or likely being, unable to assess the quality of professional services.

A central goal of any high-stakes certification program is to reliably discriminate between candidates based on the relevant knowledge and skills, not based on unrelated characteristics. In addition to concerns over potential conflicts of interest, professional membership organizations run the risk of restraint of trade allegations when the parent association has ties that are too close to the certification body.

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Currently, every home inspection association in Canada provides designations for their members. For consumers and other stakeholders how can one decide which one represents the best qualified professional?

The NHICC is not a membership based organization. It has no members, only registrants that have applied for review and recognition of the background for certification. As such the NHICC acts as a neutral 3rd party when it comes to reviewing and evaluating an individual applicant. It should be stated that the certifying body is responsible for all matters and decisions regarding the certification of individuals, thus the relevance of an independent 3rd party process.

The NHICC respects all home inspectors regardless of affiliation. Home inspector registrants who have fulfilled the requirements of the National Certification Program (NCP) receive the National Home Inspector (NHI) designation ensuring their clientele will receive professional home inspection services that are uniformly consistent and to a higher standard from coast to coast.

The NHICC is very proud of the fact that these inspectors have undergone some of the most comprehensive technical and rigorous field testing requirements found in the sector today. The NHICC is dedicated to its commitment of excellence by requiring all National Home Inspectors be regularly re-tested to ensure that their level of competency does not falter in the future.

4 STRUCTURED & GOVERNED – APPROPRIATE FOR A PROFESSION

Self-regulated professions have the legitimate power to impose restrictions on the entry and conduct of their members.

Policies are intended to be a guide for decision making. Certifying organization's need to create policies regarding all areas of the business, including but not limited to examination eligibility requirements, submission of applications, registering and administering examinations, examination development, examination scoring, reporting of results, actual performance testing and recertification requirements, as well as professional practices.

Certification in most of the Canadian home inspection associations is connected to education requirements or specific training programs leading to certification. To avoid conflicts of interest between certification and education functions, the certification agency must not also be responsible for accreditation of educational or training programs or courses of study leading to the certification. These organizations have potentially conflicting concerns and interests—their own and those of the public.

“Because there are differences in the definitions of competency, inconsistencies across their various standards of practice, and differences among the training content requirements for each of the associations, we assume there are

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significant differences across their examination and practical assessment standards.” (Inc., 2015)

Decision making for certification must be done with complete independence of the parent organizations program. Control over all essential certification and recertification decisions without being subject to approval by or undue influence from any other body. Autonomy in the management and administration of certification enhances the ability of certification program to serve stakeholder interests, primarily those of consumers of professional services.

Home inspector qualifications are, in many instances, noticeably uneven across the country. There is a need to ensure quality and consistency in the provision of professional services. Even entry qualifications must be justified as meeting the minimum that will ensure consumer protection. Sadly in unregulated provinces and territories this is not the case.

The concept of fairness is also associated with the goal of creating valid and reliable examinations. In the context of certification, fairness primarily refers to the degree to which examination candidates are treated similarly and in a reasonable manner.

Certification programs must also be cognizant of antitrust laws, which prohibit unreasonable restraints of trade such as preferred vendors. In the certification sector, the primary concern involves the extent to which collaboration among competitors in the design of the certification process may result in the unjust exclusion of some professionals from the marketplace.

The primary purpose of a certification process is the protection of the public (e.g., consumers of the services). This is accomplished by ensuring that the holders of the credential have provided evidence that they have at least met a minimum standard. Only meeting a minimum standard brings about a tiered designation system that is required to clearly identify minimum versus the required optimal performance level.

The probability that an unqualified practitioner may be granted a credential under such a system may also damage the credibility of the credential, as well as its essential purpose of protecting the public. The need for standardization of credentialing procedures goes beyond the varying certification requirements of the multitude of home inspection associations. Certification requirements must represent a consistent level in home inspection competence.

For example, consider a home inspection association that drops one of its eligibility criteria because it is too time consuming to evaluate such as the TIPR (Test Inspection with Peer Review). The significance of this variation is that the association receives more applications than it did in the past because of the larger number of potential candidates that can meet the new, possibly less stringent criteria. The big problem with these practices is that we don't know whether they actually produce acceptable new home inspectors.

The difference between a good home inspection and a bad one is either walking away from a house or finding out that the home has many significant concerns the home inspector failed to report. This equates to being counterproductive to claims of “protecting consumers”.

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5 CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Licensing is mandatory – whereas certification is voluntary. Certification simply means an individual has met a certain standard. The obvious question to that is what standard simply because standards vary widely. The issue with assuming certification by itself is a process that is often set by a wide variance of standards and tolerances within the given association – provides more evidence that there is no consistent level to the designation “certified” for home inspectors.

Consumer harm can be problematic since there are few agencies or organizations that hold records of most consumer complaints. It is problematic since any viable tracking and measurement method of complaints and harm is mainly brought to attention in the news headlines. Even under licensing there is no means to ensure that all complaints are registered to Consumer Protection. Although most home inspection associations may have an internal process for handling complaints, they have no authority to impose corrective measures to compensate consumers or suspend members practice. Left with no recourse, the consumer is often left to either live with and accept a problem, or seek legal counsel. Certainly a complaint to the courts also can be very unpredictable due to terms of agreement and liability limitations.

Determining the qualifications of an inspector can equally be a challenge to consumers. Most often it simply may be by reference to a specific home inspection association and membership. But even this can be confusing since it appears that all associations have “certified” members, but each individual association sets its own certification bar.

The current home inspection certification model is even confusing for home inspectors and lacks credibility with consumers due to the variety and inconsistency of the standards currently in place. A rigorous standard of practice will set guidelines and requirements for home inspections – what is inspected, how the inspection is done and what’s reported to the consumer. The associations have each established standards of practice for a home inspection, but these are inconsistent in content.

When a province determines that it is desirable to regulate the home inspection industry within its jurisdiction, the NHICC is committed to working with all governmental stakeholders to develop legislation that meets the complementary goals of protecting consumers and improving the home inspection industry. Those wishing to be licensed to provide home inspection services where licensing is mandated must fulfil the required licensing requirements set by the regulator. Consumers are the primary beneficiaries of sound legislation. However in review of current regulations (primarily BC and Alberta) we find two very different approaches to regulating home inspectors.

Likewise, having participated as an advisory representative in the Ontario home inspector licensing report, it presented even another different approach to licensing regulation.

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Another concern that also presents challenges is where a home inspector wants to change to another province such as British Columbia or Alberta. In the Agreement on International Trade – Labour Mobility there appears to be obstacles where inspectors are required to meet the current licensing standards of that province. This appears to prevent or limit the interprovincial movement of home inspectors. This raises the importance of one uniform home inspection certification. The NHICC goal is to see inspectors licensed and or registered based primarily on competency to perform home inspections, and not on where they are located.

Historically, the free market approach in conjunction with education, training and a screening process identified as a TIPR (Test Inspection with Peer Review) provided by the former NCA (National Certification Authority) now known and revived as NHICC National Admission Board was sufficient to meet the goal of serving the interest of home inspectors through the certification process developed under the National Initiative – National Certification Program. Data collected from the TIPR indicates a shortfall of just shy of 20% of home inspectors with inspection designations that failed to achieve a pass score of 80% on must find defects.

Ensuring quality in the performance of home inspections is a key benchmark required of all home inspectors. Unfortunately both knowledge and performance standards are not uniform, and regardless of designation there are significant gaps in the home inspection sector. Based on the stats gathered from the NHICC National Exam for technical knowledge and professional practices that requires a 70% minimum pass grade in British Columbia for licensing, the failure rate is 12%. The province of Alberta requires an 80% pass grade the failure rate is 15%.

Assessment Criteria	NCH 2006	NCH 2020	NHI
Education	Not reviewed	Show a discrepancy	150 hrs min.
National Exam	Not required	70-75% pass grade**	70% min. pass grade*
TIPR (Peer Review)	80% pass grade	Not required	80% pass grade
Fee paid inspections	150	0	150
Mentoring	Not required	10 inspections**	50 hrs min.
Report Verification	80%	75%	80%
		** Reference	* 80% Alberta

** (CAHPI, 2021)

In another example regarding home inspector certification from the USA, it indicates the following to become a CPI (Certified Professional Inspector)

To become a Certified Professional Inspector CPI®, you must:

- *Join InterNACHI as a member;*
- *Pass InterNACHI's Online Inspector Examination (free & open to everyone);*
- *Complete InterNACHI's online Code of Ethics Course (free & online for members);*
and

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- *Complete InterNACHI's online Standards of Practice Course (free & online for members).*

If you have never performed any fee-paid inspections, you must:

- *Submit four mock inspection reports to InterNACHI's Report Review Committee (free service),*
- *Once you've completed the above requirements, you must:*
- *Sign your affidavit to become a Certified Professional Inspector CPI®*

(InterNACHI, 2006)

In both of these examples above there are higher levels of certification available, but the fact remains is how can the unsuspecting consumer establish the difference based on the established lower standards? Reality, there's no clear separation, other than a consumer doing a lot of research to realize the differences that do exist. Inspectors in Canada can operate under these designations, or in other cases without any formal designation within most of Canada.

Moving forward the NHICC actively sought to build partnership with home inspection associations in Canada to provide a one-stop entity for providing uniformity in the credentialing of home inspectors. The primary goal was not to compete with the home inspection associations, but rather seek mutual agreement whereby independent third-party certification and background review can be unvaryingly assessed. All too often the associations to the detriment of credentialing, certified their home inspectors to their own specific requirements.

That is a vulnerable part where the public can be misled by varying degrees of rigor or lack thereof that can either help or possibly harm consumers. Bottom line, there's no uniform credentialing standard for what is deemed the recognized home inspection credential.

The NHICC third party independent certification is not intended to eliminate home inspection associations, but rather reduce the upfront administration tasks of certification. Likewise the NHICC opposes regulation under a real estate oversight body. Primarily it represents a direct conflict of interest and represents an impediment to a completely independent opinion of the conditions found in a home. The NHICC approach provides a cost-saving tool that allows the associations and its members to improve, adjust to the market, and eliminate unqualified inspectors by an independent unbiased 3rd party.

A critical element of fairness in any certification process is the degree to which all aspects of the program are administered in a uniform manner for all candidates. The standardization of test procedures is essential to ensure that all examinees take the test under similar conditions, so that when the resulting scores are compared across examinees they may be assumed to be measuring the same thing.

The example provided above is based on the current certification requirements. In 2006 the National Certification Program required an inspector to achieve the following to earn the NCH

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designation. In comparison, the current requirement to earn NCH is noted as NCH2020 column and in the last column it provides a comparable for the National Home Inspector credential.

The NHICC has studied comparable for most of the home inspection associations. Most often there are “gaps” in those that claim their designation ranks higher than others in the home inspection market. That’s not necessarily true, but no wonder consumers have voiced concerns when it comes to who best to perform a home inspection. Who inspects the inspectors? **In the example above lowering certification standards is not the answer to consumer protection.**

A designation such as the NHI (National Home Inspector) was designed to fit and differentiate those home inspectors that have met the requirements as outlined in the CMHC/HRDC study and development of the National Certification Program. It was always the intent that other designations can be maintained to suit the various home inspection associations – membership requirements. Once again this designation is only intended to provide NHI certificate holders a designation that has been benchmarked as meeting the appropriate level of competence and the right to practice home inspections as the “national standard” regardless of location.

6 CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS & IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Each designation has its own set of certification requirements. Some are similar, but for many there are designations that permit a home inspector with little education and field experience to provide home inspection services. Given the variance in certification requirements this creates an environment that clearly weakens claims of consumer protection.

Essential elements of the home inspection profession include standards of practice, code of ethics, inspector qualifications and the results of the inspection typically communicated in a written report. The assessment system design of a certification program involves several different components, including eligibility requirements, examinations, the certification decision, and continuing competency.

Drivers of reform in the “Industry Needs Analysis Report” by North Pacific Training and Performance Inc. it identified and recommended steps for standards development: (Inc., 2015)

1. Develop the Scope of Practice for Home Inspections
2. Develop a Competency Profile for Home Inspectors
3. Develop a Credential Model for Home Inspector Certification
4. Develop a Table of Specifications for each Theory examination
5. Develop specifications for education requirements
6. Design Protocols and Tasks for Practical Assessment(s)
7. Develop Examination Items (Questions and Alternative Responses)
8. Develop Practical Assessment(s)
9. Train and Certify Practical Assessors
10. Develop assessment administration protocols

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Many of these “needs” are already developed, but likely will require some review, refinement and consensus to ensure uniformity.

DECISION STAGE	ASSESSMENT TOOLS
Eligibility	Background Education & Training Experience
Initial Certification	Entrance Exam*
Advanced Certification	TIPR Mentoring Supervised Inspections Report Assessment
Recertification	Continuing Education Inspection Report Assessment Professional Activity – Teaching, Mentoring, etc.

A certification program needs to develop requirements that ensure that certificants maintain an acceptable level of competence even years after they are initially certified. As noted, **very few (if any) require recertification**. Some less rigorous programs do not require ongoing continuing education credit or annual credit for renewals. This is particularly important in an era of rapidly changing technology that affects the home inspection sector on a profound level.

The most common requirement for recertification is to earn a minimum number of continuing education credits every year. When it comes to consumer protection, care is required to ensure that recertification does not become simply an easy pass or that one is grandfathered for life. This merely undermines the integrity of the credential.

The NHICC strongly supports a recertification review to act as an audit.

Additionally, candidates have the right to confidentiality. Candidates either are deemed to have “passed” or “not successfully completed” an assessment. The NHICC in its exam and certification provides feedback. This offers the candidate an indication of the weak areas (vulnerability gaps) that appear to exist.

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7 ASSOCIATION SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

This brief self-assessment checklist is intended to help identify any gaps that exist in the home inspection sector.

- Well defined purpose for the population being certified.
- Autonomy in essential certification decisions, prevention of undue influence, and management of conflict of interest.
- Certification is awarded after appropriate evaluation of knowledge and practical demonstration of home inspection skills only (grandfathering is NOT allowed).
- Distinct firewall between education and certification activities, no conflict of interest or mandating a specific education/training provider.
- Sufficient resources and expertise to properly and fairly manage credentialing.
- Periodic recertification is required (retesting or continuing education with appropriate rationale).

8 THE PROPOSED REORGANIZATION FOR THE HOME INSPECTION SECTOR

Based on the challenges identified, there is a large gap and need for the home inspection sector and the home inspection associations to look beyond their own self-preservation.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

The proposed objectives of the Unification Initiative are as follows.

1. Provide a uniform system for the national recognition of a home inspection professional.
2. Provide expertise in credentialing.
3. Facilitate a national credentialing model or National Home Inspector credentialing process.
4. Share credentialing expertise information with the home inspection sector.
5. Encourage home inspection association engagement with the NHICC.
6. Identify and collect knowledge of potential changes impacting the sector.
7. Deliver valuable knowledge and feedback.
8. Protect consumers with a stronger, more unified voice.

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8.2 OVERVIEW

Professional certification does not exist in a vacuum. Rapid changes in the workplace and the necessary skills required for competent home inspectors' performance are impacting home inspectors. The value of one unified common recognized national professional designation is critical for the future of the profession. The other designations just add more to the mix.

As noted, credentialing takes many different forms, and is based on a number of different types of benchmarks to gain the credential. But real gaps exist and need to be addressed as well as the thoroughness of the inspection such as the recent trend of what are called walkthrough (limited scope) reviews by inspectors. They fall far short of being thorough or revealing enough to fulfil a complete standard home inspection.

When the workforce demographics are reviewed there is a trend towards fewer membership renewals, more inspectors retiring or closing their business. Certifiers are facing a lower number of renewals. As an example what was once estimated in the range of over 1000+ home inspectors in Ontario, there is an estimated decrease in the range of 50% fewer. With fewer home inspections taking place in the current real estate market and seemingly less opportunity for home buyers to provide an offer including a home inspection. This also has an impact on the number of home inspectors being trained, as well as can leave the market to "Buyers beware".

Occupational and professional standards must be harmonized. The future success of the home inspection profession hinges on harmonization or perhaps more to the point "unification". Without this not only will home buying consumers be impacted, there's a need to reinforce the concept to the Real Estate community and other stakeholders at large, that we are not a bunch of fractured discontents that can be splintered into reduced state of existence.

Unification to a common rigorous set of benchmarks can also help increase our value to the insurers. If not, then perhaps that can open further consideration of a self-regulatory type of insurance plan with a larger more cohesive cadre? Again insurance is simply way too expensive.

A common national home inspector designation also provides individuals the opportunity to perform their role anywhere in Canada.

8.3 ORGANIZATION SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The proposed organization will focus on the following areas for knowledge and guidance activities:

- a. Define eligibility requirements, which may include the type and level of education/training required of all certificants
- b. Set standards
- c. Uphold quality, consistency and integrity standards
- d. Implement strategies to increase the recognition and prestige of the credential
- e. Encourage the opportunities and incentives to those for insurance and potentially other benefits

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- f. Become more consumer centric placing customers on an equal balance footing with home inspection standards
- g. Periodic review and collaboration of home inspection standards, which should include requirements pertaining to customer service
- h. Recertification

8.4 THE KNOWLEDGE ENABLERS

The qualifications, technical expertise, and scope of the inspection undertaken by a home inspector vary widely. Hiring and relying on an unqualified inspector can lead to disastrous results.

Education is an important baseline requirement that must be specific to gaining adequate knowledge prior to becoming a home inspector. Although there are a good number of home inspection education courses available to home inspectors once again it is faced with variations in length, depth, rigor (proctored exams) and mode of study. Home inspector education varies as one example between 40 hours for qualification with no proctored exams and extends to more in depth education that exceeds over 200 plus hours with proctored exams.

Recertification requirements also play a fundamentally important role in safeguarding the interests of stakeholders and making certain that they are well served by the certification program. Ensuring that certificants maintain continuing competence beyond their initial certification is one of the most important responsibilities of certifiers. The recertification process encourages certificants to remain up-to-date in their field; it bolsters the confidence of the public, of employers, and of other stakeholders in the realm of certification. There are few if any, associations that actually perform a detailed review of their home inspectors.

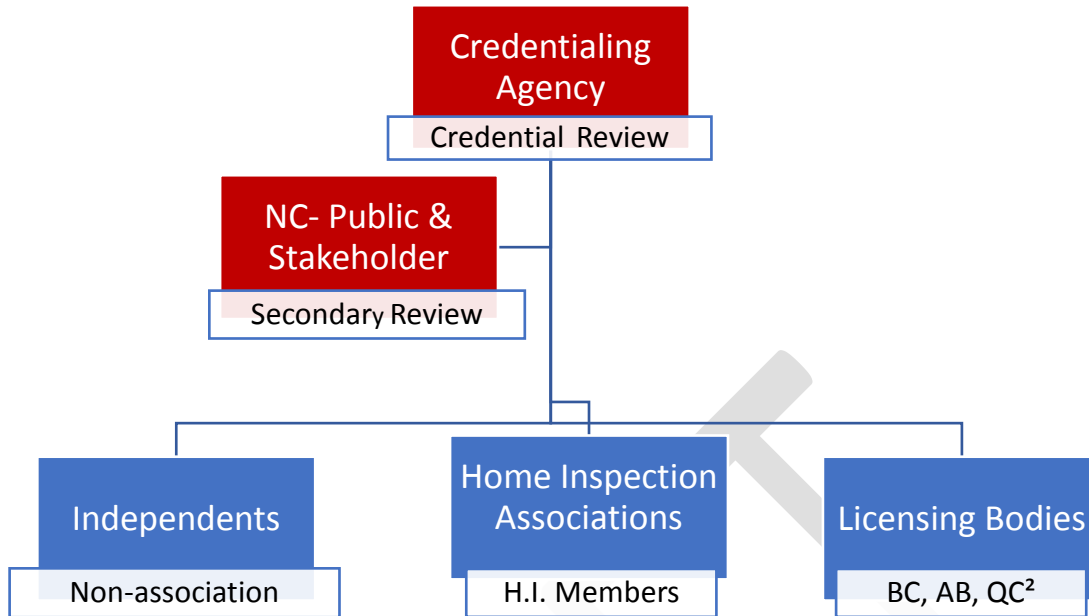
One cannot forget the importance in the mentoring and an administrative process of recognizing the value and knowledge of retired home inspectors. Once again there is a need to ensure that such valued individuals can serve in strengthening the profession.

Another knowledge enabler for consideration is the reasonable expectation of homebuyers is often far too great, given the limited nature of the duties most home inspectors carry out, and that “caveat emptor” is still alive and well in the used residential real estate market, without regard to hiring home inspectors.

9 PROPOSED ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Composition of the certification board or governing body includes that consideration should be given to representation on the board of non-credentialed individuals and public members. The NHICC currently fulfil this role, but is open to other additional appointments.

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QC² - Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) is currently reviewing home inspector standards in the Province of Quebec, and will be establishing their specific standard home inspection approach based on implementing a standard that differs from the CSA Standard. (BNQ, 2021)

Regardless of the model, strategic alliances with all home inspection associations plays a key part in this initiative. The acceptance of a uniform national system is critical to sustaining a positive future for the home inspection profession. It cannot be done in isolation. Collectively the “profession” can present a much stronger voice. Cooperatively we deal with the challenges, but under the current state with too much fragmentation and inconsistencies exist.

A proposed solution then is for home inspectors to organize and work together to implement more effective models of inspection regulation or even self-regulation to ensure that inspectors are required to be competent, but are also treated fairly.

A webinar held on June 21st, 2021 on the topic of home inspection and the current state of affairs raised a good discussion and number of comments from a group of association representatives and individual inspectors. A small portion of that discussion is highlighted below.

Len Inkster: Leigh asked what the next steps are, and Peter wants us to set a common bar. So here goes....

1. We choose the independently created CSA standard as the de-facto standard for ALL residential real estate sales/purchases.

(NHICC Comment: few associations have adopted the CSA standard – a Standards Committee is an option to review an appropriate standard. The CSA

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standard establishes a standardize approach that many disagree with for a number of reasons. Furthermore, the CSA A770 Standard is not based on a validated Occupational Analysis and was not endorsed by the profession. Example - This document was found to be inappropriate for the context specific to Quebec. – Source: BNQ 2021)

2. We use an independent credentialing group (NHICC) to set the basic Certification
3. We create a loose federation to approach Insurers as a whole to get reductions in the premiums
4. We look for more steps after that.

10 BUDGET

The financial support should have a stable and adequate funding base for its activities while also maintaining financial accountability and transparency. (To be determined)

General Administration

- Board
- Outreach

NAB (National Admission Board)

- TIPR (Test Inspection)
- Technical Knowledge Based Exam

11 IMPLEMENTATION & SCHEDULE

To be determined time frames are approximate.

1. **Develop alliances** with the H.I. associations (6 months)
 - a. Distribute report to interested parties
2. **Hold information sessions** via webinars (6 to 12 months)
 - a. Explain benefits of working together on a nation uniform certification mandate
 - b. Seek feedback and input to the process
 - c. Seek H.I. & stakeholder feedback on standards and where standardization applies
3. **Background review process** (12-18 months)
 - a. Formalize the credentialing standard
4. **Launch the Uniform National Standard**

As stated at the beginning of the report several federal government agencies funded a national initiative for the home inspection sector to “help unify a fractured industry and offer better protection to consumers”. Beyond the multitude of home inspection associations the lack of consistency in qualifications is the number one problem. **This is where a common standard is a critical part of the future and restructuring process.**

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Despite any potential challenges and some barriers to be overcome, **a uniform standard and certification program can offer significant rewards to the profession, stakeholders and the home inspection organizations that support it.** One only needs to consider the original value, time and effort of the National Certification Program invested not just in money but consideration of in-kind contributions to realize what was deemed the ideal national model.

Public opinion often ends up having a very important role in either enabling or inhibiting reforms.

Regarding next steps, what we can collectively do is act and revisit what was originally provided in a sector based approach, and end the politics of associations and let go of what happened in the past.

The **“Unification Initiative Program”** represents a solid building block to achieve “National Certification” in the truest sense for the home inspection sector. **In short third party certification as evidenced in this report can be a powerful lobbying tool.**

It is NOT aimed to replace what already exist within the various associations but simply to provide a recognized and **uniform national standard** that can be achieved without reinventing and starting a whole new certification process. It’s up to everyone to protect and build on what we already have.

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