

# Certification



## 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Certification

**Third-party certification** is a formal process for independently verifying that a product meets specific requirements or criteria. ***“Third-party certification ensures that claims by home inspectors and their respective association on quality attributes of their professional commitment and credibility are sound and reliable.”***

Previous research has focused on the important role of private third-party certifiers in reducing uncertainty and information asymmetries in the growing home inspection markets. However, credible signals to the market that certification can be provided only if certifiers maintain full objectiveness and independence. To make sure a certified product continues to conform to its underlying standard, audits are conducted periodically. Those unable to pass the auditing process face loss of certification.

The home inspection market has changed dramatically in the past decade and more so especially in the advent of the new millennium, particularly as new associations develop and other independent home inspectors as well as the public challenge the real value of certification. In good conscience home inspection associations need to ask - **have their "certified inspectors" really gone through a true certification process?** Most will find that they are in reality self-certifying their members.

Often these same certification organizations have a conflict of interest delivering and promoting their "brand" of home inspector education. Some claim that taking the education will help the individual to pass the test or will guarantee any particular score. If other preparatory courses, education, reference materials, etc. are available, the certification organization should note this.

Credible quality signaling has become a pivotal element in the home inspection business and the home inspection associations raising attention to problems and short falls to consumer transactions. The question is how can we move to correct this?

The inclusion of public members sends a strong message about the quality and dedication of NHICC. Other associations and organization in the private sector, and government agencies and regulatory bodies, recognize the value of including a public member. Also, public-member input is valued by consumers.

The NHICC stresses the importance of certification and accreditation with a national body to assess and ensure independence and objectiveness of certification. **The bottom line.....*accredited 3rd party certifiers offer more guarantees of independence, impartiality, competence and sustainable performance to consumers and also to other stakeholders.***

### NHICC - The Role of the National Certification

**A central independent certification body is the ideal model.** The legitimization of the process we use to create Certified Inspectors is what "Certification" means. This creates a substantial difference maker between our members and members of the other organizations. Third party certification can insure that the "certification" meets reasonable standards set through collaborative transparent stakeholder process. Third-party certification usually carries a requirement for independent verification to document that the individual certified was done so and that it creates a defensible barrier between the association and or/its own board of examiners.

**What does that means to the certified member?**

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We can tout our process as the best and only truly "certified" program out there for home inspectors in Canada. Others can call themselves certified, but NONE have had their programs "independently" reviewed. If they did, they probably still could not achieve this recognition, without redefining their associations and the way they conduct business.

The mere fact that the NHICC – **NHI is recognized for licensing in both BC and Alberta** speaks highly of our pursuit to maintain a higher standard. Even the former CAHPI - NCH has now lowered their certification to a lower standard, indicates it no longer meets the original intent and support of meeting the baseline National Certification Program standard.

Most home inspection associations maintain baseline entry qualifications, coupled with continuing education requirements. The NHICC research found that these qualifications are, in many instances, noticeably uneven across the country; and often lack consistency. In fact some only certify membership in the association, not the competence of the member to actually conduct a home inspection to a recognized Standard of Practice.

## **What does this mean to the public and others?**

It gives the NHICC the ability to be a valued certification body with a true independent and unbiased certification process. It is national in scope. This carries weight with the lawmakers and regulator because an outside 3rd party can review how we operate. They found the NHICC to be not just "reasonably compliant" but following the exacting terms of maintaining independent certification review by that outside body.

For home inspectors, third party certification benefits not just the members of the profession, but also the public.

In essence it would eliminate what some view as "self-certifying" and reduce the potential for conflicts of interest. This also frees up the concerns that are directed with respect to associations, not just certifying members, but requiring their preferential mandatory education in order to fund their association on the backs of their members by the same organization. Thus the NHICC operates as a non-profit organization and is open to a variety of education and training providers.

Even if we want to be realistic and deal with the issue of reasonable compliance as a goal or base it on ICE-NCCA (National Commission for Certifying Agencies), those home inspection associations need to realize that there must be "unquestionable compliance", even to claim to be in "reasonable compliance" to the ISO standards. In other words – "it must be fair and sensible and marked by sound judgement and be defensible from outside scrutiny and realize their characteristic conflicts of interest".

## **NHICC Certification Program**

- **Primary focus is on assessing knowledge, skills, or competency already acquired**
- **Goal is validation through testing**
- **Independent of a specific learning event**
- **Best used to assure baseline competencies, differentiate professionals**
- **Awards designations to recognize achievement**
- **Broad in scope**

***The NHICC is and remains a proud member of ICE – Institute for Credentialing Excellence. We seek to meet their high level standards and association with "Credentialing Excellence".***

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