

July 20, 2006

To: National Certification Authority  
Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors

From: Bill Mullen, Project Coordinator

## **Where we are with National Certification ..... and Next Steps**

*This report was created with the assistance of Kevin Sheppard and Jeff Griffiths*

The primary objective of this project was to develop and test the framework for National Certification of Canadian Home and Property Inspectors. This framework HAS been developed and tested, and it is now time for the National Certification Authority to take over the framework and operate the National Certification Program on an ongoing basis.

As we see it, the framework consists of eight major components. All components have been tested and all are reasonably functional. Individual Authority members could become responsible for specific components immediately, as follows:

### **1. Governance Component**

The National Certification Authority exists as a governing body with a number of appointed 'members'. A Chairperson has been elected from among these members, and an array of policy has been developed and approved. We recommend the Chairperson be made responsible for the creation and preliminary review of all governance policy. Approval of policy will require the passing of an Authority motion.

### **2. Financial Component**

The National Certification Authority generates revenue and incurs expenses. We recommend that the financial integrity and solvency of the National Certification Program become the responsibility of an elected 'Treasurer' .....who is a member of the Authority.

### **3. Administrative Component...including Registrar Services**

The National Certification Authority engaged the services of an interim registrar to develop and test registration systems and processes. This work is essentially complete. We recommend that a member of the National Certification Authority be made responsible for administrative issues...including responsibility for Registrar services. This responsibility would include responsibility for the development and/ or review of policy relevant to the Registrar ....with final policy approval by the National Certification Authority.

### **4. Certification Component**

The National Certification Authority is responsible for determining whether individuals interested in becoming National Certificate Holders (or Candidates) within the National Certification Program meet the program requirements. The National Certification Authority has delegated the review of individual applicant's training and experience to a National Certification Council, who have been performing this work. The final decision on certification remains with the National Certification Authority.

We recommend that a member of the National Certification Authority take responsibility for the activities of the National Certification Council....or that the Chair of the National Certification Council be appointed to the National Certification Authority. This would include responsibility for the development and/ or review of policy relevant to Certification ....with final policy approval by the National Certification Authority.

## **5. Accreditation Component**

The National Certification Authority is responsible for determining whether training providers actually do provide the necessary training required for individuals to meet the requirements of the National Certification Program. The National Certification Authority has delegated the review of training providers and training courses to a National Accreditation Council, who have been performing this work. The final decision on accreditation remains with the National Certification Authority.

We recommend that a member of the National Certification Authority take responsibility for the activities of the National Accreditation Council....or that the Chair of the National Accreditation Council be appointed to the National Certification Authority. This would include responsibility for the development and/ or review of policy relevant to Accreditation ....with final policy approval by the National Certification Authority.

## **6. TIPR Examination Component**

The National Certification Authority tests inspector ability through the TIPR process. The National Certification Authority engaged the services of an interim 'Chief Examiner' to develop and test the TIPR process, and to conduct the TIPR on the pilot group. This work is essentially complete.

We recommend that a member of the National Certification Authority take responsibility for TIPR and the activities of the Chief Examiner....or that the Chief Examiner be appointed to the National Certification Authority. This would include responsibility for the development and/ or review of policy relevant to TIPR ....with final policy approval by the National Certification Authority.

## **7. Communication Component**

We recommend that a member of the National Certification Authority take responsibility for communications with all stakeholders. This responsibility would include responsibility for the development and/ or review of policy relevant to Communications ....with final policy approval by the National Certification Authority.

## **8. Equivalency Component**

Four CAHPI provincial associations had their organization structure and RHI designations reviewed to determine whether or not their RHI designation is equivalent to the 'National Certificate Holder' designation. The reviews were conducted by consultants, with decisions on equivalency to be made by the National Certification Authority.

We recommend that a member of the National Certification Authority take responsibility for gathering and analyzing information related to Equivalency, and for handling future applications for Equivalency. This would include responsibility for the development and/ or review of policy relevant to Equivalency ....with final policy approval by the National Certification Authority.

The above points indicate that we have now reached a transition point at which the National Certification Authority will assume not only the authority and responsibility for the governance and guidance of the Certification Program which they have held, but also the ongoing daily procedures. Someone either on the NCA or delegated by them will have to assist and advise the Administrator as we prepare to extend a broad invitation to all Canadian Home Inspectors to apply to be National Certificate Holders.

The continuation of the Project is vital, but it is not without challenges. The foundation and framework are now in place, so we are ready to put the final touches to all of the components.

## CHALLENGES:

### 1. Governance:

- a. The Chair of the NCA will need to assume day-to-day control of the program to ensure smooth operation. In the absence of a Project Coordinator the Chair will manage the Program, delegating where needed. The outgoing Coordinator will try to facilitate a seamless transition and is willing to work with the Chair and the NCA on a voluntary, unpaid basis until such time as the NCA feels his services are no longer required. The level of involvement is up to the discretion of the NCA. In any event, the duties of the NCA Chair will become fairly onerous.  
The members of the NCA will each have to assume additional duties. Some will become responsible for specific branches of the Program. This might be alleviated by inviting more members onto the NCA, perhaps the Chairs of the NAC and NCC and the Chief Examiner.

### 2. Financial:

- a. Accreditation: This process has proven to be more onerous than predicted, partly due to the higher level of rigor that the NAC decided to impose. At their June 20, 2006 meeting, the NAC estimated that an addition \$ 20,000 will be needed in 2006 to properly complete their work.  
The NCA and the NAC should cooperate in developing a fair fee schedule for Accreditations. Our Project funding covered only those applications that were processed during the Pilot Project.

**Motion: To recommend to the NCA that the NAC be permitted to hire a part-time Registrar for up to 20hr per week at a cost up to \$20,000 pa.** Moved by Samir Bachir, seconded by Ron Tropea. Adopted. Discussion on this motion recognized that the part-time Registrar for the NCC is already over-tasked. The Accreditation review is complex and requires some specialist background or training in education evaluation; it is more than a simple clerical task. A retired RHI might take this on, or an assistant to the CAHPI Registrar in Ottawa might be trained to take this on, and could assist with other tasks there as well.

**Motion: To recommend to the NCA that \$50 of each certification application fee be set aside to fund part of the accreditation process.** Moved by Ron Tropea, Seconded by Gerald Smith. Adopted. We do not know how many inspectors might receive their certification in the first year. Assuming the first batch in June July would reach about 100, and the second batch in the fall would be an additional 200, a total of 300 x 50 might be available. It is possible that those in the initial batch of 100 might not have paid high enough fee to contribute. Assuming that the NCA reserves a pro-rata amount of the fee they paid as part of the pilot project, there would be  $100 \times 10 + 200 \times 50 = 11,000$  available to contribute to funding the accreditation process. Another thought is that all those applying should fund it equally and if some funds from the pilot project were available for on-going accreditation, then some of that could be allocated from their subsidy on certification.

- b. **Test Inspections with Peer Review:** The TIPR process has defined the credibility of the entire program. Through the TIPR's we are able to actually monitor and evaluate the practical competence of practitioners. Based on the sessions so far, we need to budget between \$ 200. and \$ 250. per participant. This will cover costs provided that examiners adhere faithfully to the budget guidelines specified by the Chief Examiner. However, it leaves little for ongoing Honoraria or expenses for the National or Provincial Chief Examiners.  
Some Examiners have expressed the hope that the daily Honorarium could be increased, but under the financial restrictions that have become apparent, this would seem to be impossible.  
The Chief Examiner has created and administered the evolution of a very credible TIPR Program. He continues to work diligently trying to process all Pilot Project participants before the end of August 2006. His mandate ended on June 30, 2006. The NCA now must decide whether he should continue in this position and whether or not his monthly honorarium can be continued. It is the Coordinator's opinion that this is a vital position that requires someone possessing the stature, knowledge and enthusiasm of the incumbent. The Coordinator recommends that the NCA offer to extend the Chief Examiner's mandate until July 31, 2007 but at a reduced honorarium of \$ 1000. per month. The massive job of creating forms and experimenting with procedures is virtually done. Most of the Examiner training has also been done. Therefore, some of the workload should now shift to Provincial Chief Examiners and individual examiners.
- c. **Certifications:** The administrative work involved with Certification will be costly. Assembling and distributing application packages will take many hours. In addition, the office will be deluged with questions.  
The Certification Council will need to meet face-to-face at least twice during the year.
- d. **Communications:** We are hoping to receive some financial help but that is uncertain. Unfortunately, for now we need to work with the limited funds at our disposal. We have made arrangements with Northwest Public Affairs which will help move our message to some stakeholders. CMHC has also agreed to use their facilities to make certain announcements about the Certification project. We have also agreed to allow an outside firm apply for Communications funding from a government department. We also need a brochure (similar to the one we have for practitioners) that will appeal to stakeholders including the general public. The Coordinator has been working on this as a special sub-project.

### **3. Administrative/Registrar**

The workload for the Administrator will be very heavy, especially during the months immediately following the broad invitation to all inspectors to apply. Hopefully we can qualify to receive some funding to hire additional administrative help.

The Administrator needs a comprehensive package of information and documents to send to each applicant. The Coordinator has offered to help her create this package which should include at least a letter from the NCA Chair, a project brochure, a copy of the official Q & A, and the Application for Background Review.

The Interim Registrar has created a data-base for the Program and has been inputting as much information as necessary. His mandate ended on June 30, 2006. The NCA can decide to extend his mandate, appoint someone else as Registrar, or ask Sharry Featherston to accept the joint position of Administrator/Registrar. The Coordinator feels that from an administrative point of view, it makes sense for this work to be done at the CAHPI Head Office. The Administrator/Registrar would be able to manage as long as she was given some administrative help, and the NCA has already taken measures to access funding for this. The Coordinator recommends that the NCA advise the Interim Registrar that his services would be valuable until August 31, 2006, at which time his duties will be assumed by the Administrator.

#### 4. **Certification:**

The NCC has met once in person and has corresponded continuously. Approximately 80% of the Pilot Project applicants have had their dossiers examined and reviewed. The NCC is also reviewing some additional files. The NCC is ready to recommend a large number for Certification once they receive confirmation of E & O Insurance coverage and a 'Hold Harmless' letter from the NCA. The Coordinator has been working with our lawyer and insurer to prepare these. We expect that both are almost ready.

The administrator has been trying to contact some Pilot Project Participants who need to provide additional information to complete their files.

If there is a good response to the broad invitation, this Council and the Administrator will become quite busy. The Pilot Project has allowed for the development of the necessary forms and procedures but some office routines will need to be developed to facilitate the influx of applications.

#### 5. **Accreditation**

The NAC has decided on a relatively high level of rigor, which has created some delays. The accreditation process is much slower than first anticipated due to the increase in information required from applicants for Accreditation. The number of files that have been fully processed is low, but the NAC Chair and his Council members are very diligent and the Coordinator has every faith they will be able to make recommendations on several applicants very soon.

Part of the challenge with Accreditations has been the reluctance of many course providers to apply. This is partly because this is a new program and very little is known about it. Once again, this should be addressed in our Communications Strategy.

It is possible that we could see an increase in applications for Accreditation once the announcements are made that some people are actually receiving the National certification. Perhaps at that time, more course providers will recognize the value in having their courses approved for use by the NCA.

## 6. TIPR Examinations

Despite the efforts of the Chief Examiner, the number of Pilot Project Applicants who have been subjected to the TIPR Review is lower than anticipated at this point in the project. To date, about half of the participants have been examined. We have examiners in all regions now, but they are slow to organize TIPR sessions for some reason. The Chief Examiner cannot be expected to travel to every TIPR in the country. That is why we have a number of examiners in each province.

Unfortunately, it has been quite obvious that some regions are using the TIPR process as a political football. Some TIPR sessions have taken place with fewer than the desired number of applicants, while local inspectors in the Pilot Project were not notified about the event. It is disappointing to see personal interests and petty politics interfering with this project. This has been and must continue to be an inclusive and fair Program.

We need to encourage our regional bodies to urge their boards and members to put aside their feelings towards other individuals and organizations. The future of the Canadian Home Inspection profession needs this National Certification Program to be successful.

The Coordinator has instructed the Chief Examiner to do whatever is necessary to process all of the Pilot Project people through at least one TIPR session no later than August 31, 2006. Unfortunately, since our finances will not allow much travel, he needs to rely on people in the various regions to organize the sessions. On the other hand, the original plan for the TIPR process was that the Chief Examiner could delegate these tasks to his Examiners in the field.

It is not necessarily difficult to organize a TIPR session, yet some people have intentionally made it as complex and frustrating as possible.

## 7. Communications

This is the one area of the project that has been almost overlooked. Part of the reason is that our original funding estimate allowed \$ 130,000 for a Communications Strategy. Since our funding was reduced drastically, a large amount was taken from Communications because other items were indispensable.

The NCA has to be innovative and find inexpensive methods of informing stakeholders including the public about the value of this program. The NCA has made some announcements to the CAHPI membership in the CHI Magazine and various electronic messages. However, we have been unable to reach very many non-CAHPI inspectors.

The communications challenge is even more daunting now that the Pilot Project is winding down and we will be entering the permanent implementation stage.

The NCA has made some decisions recently that will alleviate this problem a bit, but we need to call on our members, associations and outside stakeholders to help us make the National Certification a widely recognized term. In turn, this will enhance CAHPI and its provincial associations.

## 8. Equivalency

We have received Equivalency applications from only four of our seven CAHPI associations. Our consultants have reviewed them and have sent the Coordinator their conclusions and recommendations.

One large challenge has been to attract other associations to the program. To date, we have invited a few other associations to apply for Equivalency assessment, but none have accepted the invitation. This is perhaps not surprising. They could be reluctant to reveal much to a 'competing' organization. However, it is possible that they will be more willing to cooperate when they see that the Program has succeeded and is actually receiving widespread acceptance and recognition.

The NCA needs to determine a fee schedule for those organization that wish to be evaluated. The Project funding allowed some money for this, but after the Pilot Project, the Equivalency part of the project will have to be self-sustaining.

## CONCLUSION

Obviously, each segment of the project has had its share of both successes and challenges. We have made some suggestions in this report, but the most important recommendation that the Coordinator wishes to make is that the NCA issue an invitation to the unsuccessful Pilot Project applicants no later than August 15, 2006 to apply for National Certification. I also recommend that a further invitation go out to all Canadian Home Inspectors on September 15, 2006.

The Councils, forms, procedures, etc. are all in place and we have the ability to move ahead. If we can attract even 200 participants this would generate \$ 100,000 that would help us with the communications strategy and other expenses.

As the loose ends of the project come together, it is gratifying to see that we have accomplished an incredible amount of very complex work involving hundreds of people in a very short time. The project will conclude within the budget guidelines.....but not by much.

I have included some additional information with this report in the form of three Appendices.

As we said in the beginning of this report:

**“The primary objective of this project was to develop and test the framework for National Certification of Canadian Home and Property Inspectors. This framework HAS been developed and tested, and it is now time for the National Certification Authority to take over the framework and operate the National Certification Program on an ongoing basis.”**



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