

National Home Inspector Certification Council

Stakeholder Meeting Synopsis with Consumer Protection (June 25th, 2013 – Toronto Ontario)

Greetings:

The meeting was well attended by most all of the stakeholders as listed in my earlier release from Consumer Protection. This list is comprised of 13 inspection associations, realtors, warranty, home builders, insurance, educators/trainers, just to briefly name a few.

Most of the discussion was delivered by David Breezer (Ministry of Consumer Services - Ontario) other than a few brief comments by the Deputy Minister – Frank Denton. David talked mostly about “process” and “collaboration” as a collective whole. He indicated that he is well aware of other initiatives such as what has transpired in BC and Alberta, as well as the proposed development of a “Technical National Standard” by CSA.

It appears at face value that most members of associations provide a home inspection based on an established SOP. However, although somewhat different, all seem to share common core performance standards of what they do regarding a home inspection. He also spoke to the current state of confusion for consumers in the marketplace. What should a consumer use as their home inspection/home inspector benchmark?

He presents this as moving forward as a joint engagement process, thus seeking consensus. The timetable provided appears to be timelines between now and the year end. They are looking at a panel of 8-12 individuals from a mixed background to serve as a panel of experts. He indicated that we collectively need to look at listening to each other.

Ultimately one goal is to establish what would be a “minimum qualification” for a home inspector.

The presentation also spoke briefly about what they have heard so far.....focusing on 3 key areas - technical competence, professional attributes and consumer protection. The 4th area being governance – how will this run.

On the technical area:

- Clearer definition of a home inspection
- Scope of the inspection
- Professional standards
- Potential subject areas – such as thermal imaging, energy evaluations, etc.

Professional attributes:

- Education – level of experience and qualifications
- Various designations
- Specialization – should be explored
- Labour mobility and compliance

Consumer protection:

- Awareness of services
- Transparency and consistency – standards and qualifications
- Ethical standards/conflicts of interest
- Financial protection – such as insurance, warranty or surety bond

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Governance component:

- Registrations and complaint handling
- Development of a regulatory spectrum
- Governance structure
- Costs
- Transition strategy

There was a brief Q&A period in which a number of the stakeholders voiced their concerns about insurance, vendor disclosure, risk management, and the potential cost concerns. There was no direct comment about not going down this path during this session or why other than indicating that approximately 140,000 home inspections are estimated to be performed throughout Ontario. This is based on 70% of sales of approximately 200,000 homes.

Bottom line – what is a “standard inspection”, “what should consumers expect”?

David Breezer did mention that a website will be launched to assure that ALL stakeholders have an opportunity to offer their feedback. He believes this will eventually strengthen the consumer’s financial concerns with respect to home buying.

The main contacts for email communiqués are: Aimee Skelton and Ben Valido

NOTE: This is simply a brief summary of the meeting. I will pass along more information as it becomes available.

Additionally, you may also come across a PowerPoint presentation on several inspector forums. I caution that is not the complete version of what was delivered. Certainly it did not have the logo of any home inspection association depicted.

Feedback: The NHICC welcomes your thoughts or concerns regarding the potential for home inspector licensing in Ontario. Please feel free to voice your concerns to us to collectively bring forward. Alternatively “we” can wait and see when another opportunity arises to offer Consumer Protection your own personal feedback.

July 2nd Update From MCS

Meeting Summary

- The ministry presented an engagement process to review, develop and recommend home inspector qualifications for government.
- The ministry announced that SEG Management Consultants Inc. will be the facilitator for a panel of experts to be established in August 2013. SEG will support the panel as they prepare a findings report for government consideration and public review.
- The ministry launched homeinspectors@ontario.ca to encourage dialogue and receive stakeholder input. You are welcome to provide feedback to the ministry at any time. Emails are delivered directly to ministry project staff.
- The ministry also committed to sharing information bulletins via email with interested parties regarding the Home Inspector Qualifications project. Anyone can be added to this bulletin list by emailing: homeinspectors@ontario.ca

Next Steps

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The ministry with the support of SEG Management Consultants Inc. will be establishing a panel of experts. Panel members must be willing to represent the broader public interest, to commit to being engaged, available during the months of August to November and attend bi-weekly meetings. Note that panel membership will be determined with a view to balanced representation of all interests. Additional criteria are presented on page 10 of the slide deck enclosed. Names and brief descriptions of how the candidate meets the criteria can be emailed to homeinspectors@ontario.ca by July 12, 2013.

Disponible en français. Contactez-nous: inspecteurshabitations@ontario.ca

Remember - it's best to be proactive rather than reactive!

*Report by: Claude Lawrenson - NHICC – Certification Council
Contact me if you would like a copy of the CMS Presentation*