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A thorough home inspection is recommended for everyone before buying a house, and requiring licences will help ensure inspectors are qualified.

# B.C. sets the standard for Canada by licencing home inspectors

It took the government a long time to act, but now buyers are better protected

BY OWEN DICKIE AND  
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It's been a long strange trip for British Columbia's trained and qualified home inspectors and the consumers who depend on them, but last week the B.C. government finally announced it will take action to license B.C.'s home inspectors.

What will it mean for B.C. consumers? Quite a lot, actually. But let's begin with what home inspectors actually do, and how it took Victoria seven years of procrastination, false starts, and foolish positions before it acted on behalf of consumers.

Home inspections began in the early 1970s as a direct response to the growing demand of homebuyers wanting to learn about the condition of a house before purchase. Since then, more and more people — along with an increasing number of lending institutions — have come to rely on a home inspection, because more information equals a more informed purchase decision, which equals fewer surprises.

A home inspection itself is a comprehensive visual examination of the home's overall structure, major systems, components, and property conditions. A properly trained home

inspector will review your house as a system, looking at how one component of the house might affect the operability or lifespan of another. Components that are not performing properly are identified, as well as items that are beyond their useful life or are unsafe.

The idea, of course, is to minimize the risk to your investment, because no one wants to face serious unexpected costs shortly after a purchase.

It was back in 2002 that the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors of British Columbia — CAHPI(BC) — asked the B.C. government to take action to ensure the highest standards for those seeking to call themselves home and property inspectors. Because in B.C., anyone with a business card could call themselves a home inspector.

At first, it was a lonely effort. The B.C. government passed, saying it was busy cutting red tape. Then, under pressure, the government announced that prospective

homebuyers in B.C. were covered by the Trade Practices Act and the Consumer Protection Act. But those Acts merely provided recourse after a purchase, not protection in advance of it. They offered nothing to consumers when they needed protection the most — when they were making the biggest spending decision of their lives and were seeking expert advice to aid them in making an informed decision. There were all kinds of excuses offered by the provincial government for not acting, and one by one, we exposed each excuse as sillier than the one before it. Progress was non-existent: In six years, five ministers carried the file.

But then, we reached out to the media for help. And to B.C.'s mayors and councils. And they stepped up for consumers in ways we never imagined.

The B.C. media launched exposes on untrained and unqualified home inspectors. *The Vancouver Sun* wrote editorials demanding high standards, and more than 50 mayors and councils from across B.C. wrote the premier asking for high inspection standards.

Last week, under Solicitor-General John van Dongen, the B.C. government finally responded, announcing that by March 31, all home inspectors in B.C. must meet the required qualifications of CAHPI(BC), the National Certification Program, or the Association of Applied Science Technologists. CAHPI(BC) members have carried Errors and Omissions and General Liability Insurance for years, and now, all home inspectors will have to do the same — if they are going to be licensed in this province.

With this single move, B.C. becomes the provincial leader in home and property inspection standards in this country. It took a long time, but ultimately, with government embracing our recommended approach, B.C. consumers are the real winners.

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