

ASK THE INSPECTOR

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What are the qualification requirements for someone to become a home inspector in Canada?



Compared to many other professions, the home inspection profession is in its infancy. There are currently no licensing requirements for the home inspection profession in Canada. Since there are no licensing requirements, anyone can currently hang out a sign and call himself or herself a home inspector. However, for a number of years, interests of Canadian home inspectors have been promoted by a national organization called the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors (CAHPI) and its affiliated regional/provincial associations. CAHPI is essentially a council of members consisting of seven Canadian regional/provincial home inspection associations from British Columbia to Atlantic Canada. Individual home inspectors are members of their respective regional/provincial association. Each association has their own membership levels and requirements. Fully qualified members of each association fall under such titles

such as "Registered Home Inspector", "Member", and "Certified Member". In Ontario, legislation has been passed for full members of the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors to be granted exclusive use and legal protection of the designation "Registered Home Inspector". In addition, each association has developed by-laws that give the associations authority to regulate and discipline their members. Recent negotiations between all of the regional/provincial associations to develop national "model" by-laws to be implemented by each of the regional/provincial associations of CAHPI has been a critical step in the direction of self-regulation and the requirement for all practicing home inspectors to eventually be licensed.

To be eligible as a fully qualified member within each regional/provincial association, there are several requirements. In general, fully qualified home inspectors have completed a series of technical examinations, performed a minimum of 250 fee paid home inspections in accordance with the CAHPI Standards of Practice, have inspection report quality verified, carry adequate errors and omissions insurance, and are required to complete ongoing education requirements to maintain their membership status.

In addition to the above-noted qualifications, many qualified home inspectors may also be Professional Engineers, Architects, Engineering Technologists or individuals with extensive experience in the home inspection profession.

What type of training does AmeriSpec require of its home inspectors?

Prior to acceptance by AmeriSpec, prospective home inspectors are required to meet high qualifications and experience standards. In addition to aggressively pursuing membership status of provincial/regional home inspection associations, AmeriSpec home inspectors must initially be certified by AmeriSpec by undergoing a comprehensive inspector training program, including a requirement to pass a rigorous written exam. Prior to attending AmeriSpec training in Mississauga, Ontario and Memphis, Tennessee, each prospective home inspector must complete a comprehensive home study course. AmeriSpec has constructed a full-scale model of a home inside their training facility in Memphis, Tennessee. This home is complete with working systems and components, and has been designed to help train individuals



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on what to look for when performing a home inspection.

The house even includes a roof so inspectors can see how shingles, flashing and roofing typically look when installed properly. Upon completion of training, each inspector is subjected to a mentoring program that includes many "ride-a-long" inspections with seasoned/qualified home inspectors and required to complete in-field review before he or she can independently inspect a house. The result of all this preparation is a quality home inspector who completes a home inspection that is performed objectively and professionally. AmeriSpec inspectors provide a comprehensive, narrative inspection report that includes more than 400 items and 1,000 checkpoints throughout the home. All inspectors are also required to update their knowledge and abilities on a regular basis by attending AmeriSpec training/certification courses 3-4 times per year. Examples of certification courses provided by AmeriSpec include Wood Energy Transfer Technology – Basic Inspection Course, EnerGuide for Houses Energy Efficiency Evaluator Certification, Residential Indoor Air Quality Investigator Training Program, and Residential Ventilation.

What is the basis and scope of a properly completed home inspection?

One of the objectives of CAHPI has been to develop and continuously improve a set of industry standards, known as "Standards of Practice", to ensure that prospective homebuyers and real estate agents understand the scope and intent of the service that a fully qualified home inspector is providing. AmeriSpec has always complied with and supports these Standards of Practice. This provides homebuyers with peace of mind knowing that a home inspection completed in accordance with the Standards of Practice is following carefully developed

guidelines that help an inspector to identify fundamental information about a home's condition. Unfortunately, as with any profession, litigious situations occasionally arise in the home inspection profession. When they do, the Standards of Practice are often referred to directly to measure whether an inspector has performed a home inspection properly. CAHPI also has a Code of Ethics that defines a qualified inspector's responsibility to act in a strict, fair, impartial and professional manner. A copy of the CAHPI Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics can be found on the Amerispec website at www.amerispec.ca

Are there any limitations of a home inspection?

Yes. An article regarding home inspector qualifications should not go without some discussion regarding the limitations of a home inspection. This is because over the years there have been homebuyers who have retained fully qualified home inspectors to perform a home inspection, and after purchasing a home, encounter a problem in the home they believe the home inspector should have noticed. In some cases, the situations have merit, but in many of these situations, the reasons for the "apparent oversights" are not related to the inspector's qualifications, but rather the inherent, and unfortunately sometimes significant, limitations of the home inspection. The CAHPI Standards of Practice indicate that home inspections are non-intrusive, visual examinations of accessible areas of the home at the time of the inspection and that inspections are not technically exhaustive; this creates inherent limitations in the inspection process. Several examples of these limitations include:

- Inspections are non-intrusive; moving furniture and personal belongings and opening up finished walls is therefore not required (or appropriate) to complete an inspection.

Occasionally, significant deficiencies are not identified due to concealed conditions or the presence of personal storage. Inspectors cannot comment on what they cannot see.

- Inspections are based on observations that have manifested themselves at the time of the inspection. For example, if there is no evidence of active or past moisture in the basement of a home at the time of an inspection, it is unfair to assume an inspector should foresee a future flooding problem.
- Inspections are not technically exhaustive. A technically exhaustive inspection would involve retaining several specialists (i.e. heating/roofing/electrical/plumbing/window contractors and a structural engineer) to review the house. The inspection would likely take several days and cost several thousand dollars, which most homebuyers would view as an unacceptable cost to assist in evaluating the overall condition of a home.

These are all examples of limitations of the home inspection, and are independent of the qualifications of the inspector. It is important for those involved with home inspections to understand that as the home inspection profession matures, these limitations will likely continue to exist, regardless of whether home inspectors are licensed or not. However, in spite of these limitations, a home inspection completed by a qualified home inspector remains an excellent tool to manage and minimize the risk associated with purchasing a property.

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