



ASSOCIATION DES
INSPECTEUR(E)S EN
BÂTIMENTS DU QUÉBEC

QUEBEC ASSOCIATION OF
BUILDING INSPECTORS

Standards of Practice

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Note: Underlined words are defined in the Glossary.

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(Standard derived from the ASHI @ 1993 Standard)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Quebec Association of Building Inspectors (AIBQ), established in 1990 and incorporated in 1992, is a not-for-profit professional association whose volunteer membership consists of private, fee-paid home inspectors. The objectives of the Association include the promotion of excellence within the profession and the continual improvement of its members' inspection services to the general public.

1.2 These Standards of Practice:

- A. provide minimal guidelines for the visual inspection of a property with less than five (5) dwelling units used mainly for residential purposes;
- B. state the services provided by fee-paid inspectors in private practice;
- C. define certain terms relating to the inspection;
- D. provide guidelines that aim to standardize the presentation of an inspection report completed in accordance with the present Standards of Practice.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1 An inspection performed in accordance with these guidelines is intended to provide the client with the necessary information required for a better understanding of the condition of the property, as observed at the time of the inspection.

2.2 The Inspector shall:

- A. visually observe the readily accessible installed systems and components that are listed in these Standards;
- B. submit a written report to the client that shall:

1. describe those systems and components that are specified in sections 4 to 12 of these Standards;
2. state which systems and components designated for inspection in these Standards have been inspected and identify those systems and components that have not been inspected and indicate the reasons why they have not been inspected;
3. state any systems and components so inspected that were found to be in need of immediate repair or of major repair, including safety items;
4. inform his client of major repairs and may refer to an annexed table of life cycles and costs for these respective repairs.

2.3 The Inspector may:

- A. report on observations and conditions in addition to those required in Section 2.2;
- B. provide additional inspection services;
- C. exclude certain systems and components from the inspection, if requested by the client in writing.

3. GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

3.1 General limitations:

- A. inspections done in accordance with these Standards are visual and are not technically exhaustive;
- B. these Standards are applicable to a property, in part or as a whole, of mostly residential occupancy, with less than five (5) dwelling units.

3.2 General exclusions:

A. Inspectors are NOT required to report on:

1. the life expectancy of any component or system;
2. the causes of the need for a major repair;
3. the methods, materials and costs of corrections;
4. the suitability of the property for any specialized use;
5. compliance or non-compliance with applicable building codes or zoning, soil occupancy and construction bylaws, or with any other applicable codes or bylaws, dispensations or easements;
6. the market value of the property or its marketability;
7. the advisability or inadvisability of purchase of the property;
8. any component or system that was not observed;
9. the presence or absence of pests such as wood damaging organisms, rodents, insects or other harmful animals;
10. all underground items (such as septic tanks, leaching fields, buried tanks, wells, underground piping, foundation drainage systems, etc.);
11. any non permanent item and/or decorative item;
12. any auxiliary heating device.

B. Inspectors are NOT required to:

1. offer or perform any act or service contrary to law;
2. offer warranties or guarantees of any kind;
3. offer or perform engineering services or architectural services;
4. calculate the mechanical strength, adequacy, or efficiency of any system or component;
5. enter any area or perform any procedure that may damage the property or its components or be dangerous to the inspector or other persons;
6. operate any system or component that is shut down or that cannot otherwise be operated without risk;
7. operate any system or component that does not respond to normal operating controls;
8. disturb insulation, move personal items, furniture, equipment, plant life, soil, snow, ice, or debris that obstructs access or visibility;

9. determine the presence or absence of any suspected hazardous substances including but not limited to toxins, carcinogens, contaminants in soil, water and air, nor comment on noise level;
10. determine the effectiveness of any system installed to control or remove suspected hazardous substances;
11. predict future conditions, including but not limited to failure of components;
12. project operating costs of components;
13. evaluate acoustical characteristics of any system or component.

3.3 Limitations and exclusions specific to individual systems are listed in following sections.

4. SYSTEM: STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

4.1 The inspector shall observe:

A. structural components including:

1. foundations
2. floors
3. walls
4. columns
5. ceilings
6. roofs

4.2 The inspector shall

A. describe the type of:

1. foundation
2. floor structure
3. wall structure
4. columns
5. ceiling structure
6. roof structure

B. probe structural components where deterioration is suspected. However, probing is NOT required when probing would damage any finished surface;

C. enter underfloor crawl spaces and attic spaces except when access is obstructed, when entry could damage the property, or when dangerous or adverse situations are suspected;

D. report the methods used to observe underfloor crawl spaces and attics;

E. report signs of water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building components.

5. SYSTEM: EXTERIOR

5.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. exterior wall cladding, flashings and trim;
- B. permanent doors and permanent windows, accessible from ground level;
- C. electric garage door operators;
- D. decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, railings and basement windows wells;
- E. eaves, soffits and fascias;
- F. vegetation, lot grading, drainage, driveways, patios, garage entrances, walkways and retaining walls with respect to their effect on the condition of the building.

5.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe exterior wall cladding materials;
- B. operate all exterior permanent doors including garage doors manually operated or equipped with permanently installed electric controls;
- B. report whether or not any garage door operator will automatically reverse or stop when meeting reasonable resistance during closing.

5.3 The inspector is NOT required to observe:

- A. storm windows, storm doors, screening, shutters, awnings and similar seasonal accessories;
- B. fences;
- C. safety glazing;
- D. garage door operator remote control transmitters;
- E. geological conditions;
- F. soil conditions;
- G. recreational facilities;
- H. outbuildings other than garages and carports.

6. SYSTEM: ROOFING

6.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. roof coverings;
- B. roof drainage systems;
- C. flashings;
- D. skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations;
- E. signs of leaks or abnormal condensation on building components.

6.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe the type of roof covering materials;
- B. report the methods used to inspect the roof covering.

6.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. walk on the roof;
- B. observe permanently attached accessories including but not limited to solar heating installations, antennas, lightning arrestors and other similar accessories.

7. SYSTEM: PLUMBING

7.1 The inspector shall observe:

A. the interior water supply and distribution system including:

1. water supply and distribution piping materials;
2. fixtures and faucets;
3. functional flow;
4. leaks;
5. cross connections;

B. the interior drain, waste and vent system including:

1. traps; drain, waste, and vent piping; piping supports;
2. leaks;
3. functional drainage;

C. water heating systems including:

1. water heating equipment;
2. normal operating controls;
3. automatic safety controls;
4. the exterior of chimneys, flues, and vents;

D. fuel storage and distribution systems including:

1. interior fuel storage equipment including tanks, supply piping, venting, and supports;
2. leaks;

E. sumps drainage system and components.

7.2 The inspector shall:

A. describe:

1. water supply and distribution piping materials;
2. drain, waste, and vent piping materials;
3. water heater equipment;

B. operate all plumbing fixtures, including all faucets not connected to a household appliance.

7.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. state the effectiveness of anti-siphon devices;
- B. determine whether water supply and waste disposal systems are public or private;
- C. operate automatic safety controls;
- D. operate any valve except water closet flush valves, fixture faucets and watering hose faucets;

- E. observe:
 1. water conditioning systems;
 2. automatic fire extinguishing sprinkler systems;
 3. lawn sprinkler systems;
 4. on-site water supply quality and quantity;
 5. on-site waste disposal systems;
 6. foundation drainage (French Drain) systems;
 7. "spas".

8. SYSTEM: ELECTRICAL

8.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. service entrance conductors;
- B. service equipment, grounding equipment, the main over-current device, the main panel and distribution panels;
- C. amperage and voltage ratings of the service;
- D. branch circuit conductors, their overcurrent devices, and the compatibility of their ampacities and voltages;
- E. the operation of a representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles located inside the house, and on its exterior;
- F. the polarity and grounding of all receptacles within six feet of interior plumbing fixtures, and all receptacles in the garage or carport, and on the exterior of inspected structures;
- G. the operation of Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters.

8.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe:
 1. service amperage and voltage;
 2. service entry conductor materials;
 3. service type as being overhead or underground;
 4. the location of the main panel and distribution panels;
- B. report any observed aluminum branch circuit wiring.

8.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. insert any tool, probe or testing device inside the panels;
- B. test or operate any over current device except Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters;
- C. dismantle any electrical device or control;
- D. observe:
 1. low voltage systems;
 2. smoke detectors;
 3. any wiring that is not a part of the primary electrical distribution system such as telephone, security systems, cable TV, intercoms or other ancillary systems.

9. SYSTEM: HEATING

9.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. Permanently installed heating systems including:
 1. heating equipment, including heat pump;
 2. normal operating controls;
 3. automatic safety controls;
 4. the exterior of the chimneys, flue pipes and draft control dampers;
 5. heat distribution systems including fans, circulating pumps, ducts, piping, dampers, air filters, radiators and convectors;
 6. the presence of an installed heat source in each room.

9.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe:
 1. the energy source;
 2. heating equipment and distribution type;
- B. operate the systems using normal operating controls except in the case of solid fuel heating devices;
- C. open readily openable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance;

9.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. operate heating systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage;
- B. operate automatic safety controls;
- C. ignite or extinguish solid fuel fires;
- D. observe:
 1. the interior of the chimneys, flues pipes and draft control dampers;
 2. the interior of heating equipment;
 3. humidifiers;
 4. electronic air filters;
 5. the uniformity or adequacy of heat supply to each room;
 6. auxiliary heating devices.

10. SYSTEM: CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING

10.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. central air conditioning including:
 1. cooling and air handling equipment, including heat pumps;
 2. normal operating controls;
- B. distribution systems including:
 1. ducts, dampers and air filters;
 2. the presence of an installed cooling source in each room.

10.2 The inspector shall:

- A. describe:
 1. energy sources;
 2. cooling equipment type;
- B. operate the systems using normal operating controls when exterior temperature permits;
- C. open readily openable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.

10.3 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. operate cooling systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage;
- B. observe non-central air conditioners (such as window units);
- C. observe the uniformity or adequacy of cool-air supply to the various rooms;
- D) observe components that are not visually accessible without having to dismantle them.

11. SYSTEM: INTERIORS

11.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. walls, ceilings, and floors;
- B. steps, stairways, balconies, and railings;
- C. counters and cabinets;
- D. doors and windows including the hardware;
- E. separation walls, ceilings, and doors between a dwelling unit and an attached garage or another dwelling unit;
- F. sumps.

11.2 The inspector shall:

- A. operate a representative number of permanent windows and interior doors;
- B. report signs of water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on the building components.

11.3 The inspector is NOT required to observe:

- A. paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments on the interior walls, ceilings, and floors;
- B. carpeting;
- C. draperies, blinds, and other window treatments;
- D. household appliances;
- E. recreational facilities.

12. SYSTEM: INSULATION & VENTILATION

12.1 The inspector shall observe:

- A. insulation in unfinished attic spaces and foundation areas;
- B. ventilation of attics, crawl spaces and basements;
- C. devices of the main ventilation system;
- D. kitchen, bathroom, and laundry venting systems.

12.2 The inspector shall describe:

- A. insulation and vapor retarders observed in the unfinished spaces.

12.3 The inspector is **NOT** required to report on:

- A. concealed insulation and vapor retarders;
- B. venting equipment which is integral to household appliances.

GLOSSARY

AUXILIARY HEATING DEVICE

Device and its accessories that have been added as a complement to the permanently installed heating system or that compensate in case of a breakdown or a failure of the permanently installed heating system. The auxiliary heating device includes but are not limited to stoves and fireplaces regardless of the fuel or the energy source used.

AUTOMATIC SAFETY CONTROLS

Devices designed and installed to protect systems and components from excessively high or low pressures and temperatures, excessive electrical current, loss of water, loss of ignition, fuel leaks, fire, freezing, or other unsafe conditions.

CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING

A system which uses ducts to distribute cooled and/or dehumidified air to more than one room or uses pipes to distribute chilled water to heat exchangers in more than one room, and which is not plugged into an electrical convenience outlet.

CLIENT

Person or organization for whom the report is intended.

COMPONENT

A readily accessible and observable aspect of a system, such as a floor, or wall, but not individual pieces such as boards or nails where many similar pieces make up the component.

CROSS CONNECTION

Any physical piping connection or arrangement to the water distribution system which would allow any source of contamination to come in contact and contaminate the potable water, whether this contact be introduced by an overflow or by a siphoning action.

DANGEROUS OR ADVERSE SITUATIONS

Situations which pose a threat of injury to the inspector, and those situations which require use of special protective clothing or safety equipment.

DESCRIBE

To report in writing a system or component by its type, or other observed characteristics to distinguish it from other components used for the same purpose.

DISMANTLE

To take apart or remove any component, device or piece of equipment that is bolted, screwed, or fastened by other means and that would not be dismantled by a homeowner in the course of normal household maintenance.

ENGINEERING

Analysis or design work requiring extensive preparation and experience in the use of mathematics, chemistry, physics, and the engineering sciences.

ENTER

To go into an area to observe all visible components.

FAILURE

Sudden unexpected breakdown.

FUNCTIONAL DRAINAGE

A drain is functional when it empties in a reasonable amount of time and does not overflow when another fixture is drained simultaneously.

FUNCTIONAL FLOW

A reasonable flow at the highest fixture in a dwelling when another fixture is operated simultaneously.

HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

Kitchen and laundry appliances, room air conditioners, and similar appliances.

IMMEDIATE REPAIR

A repair that, if not carried out immediately, can contribute to the deterioration of the component in question or of another component or system, and/or create a dangerous situation for the occupants of the building.

INSPECTOR

Any person who examines any component of a building, through visual means and through normal user controls, without the use of mathematical sciences.

INSTALLED

Attached or connected such that the installed item requires tools for removal.

MAJOR REPAIR

A repair that is considered to be important in nature or in cost and/or that can have serious consequences if it is not carried out.

NON PERMANENT OR DECORATIVE ITEM

An independent item or accessory that is not part of any system or component of the property or that is not necessary for the well functioning of a system or component. Non permanent or decorative items include but are not limited to the following items : alarm & lighting systems, motion detectors, antennas, lightning arrestor, decorative lighting.

NORMAL OPERATING CONTROLS

Homeowner operated devices such as a thermostat, wall switch, or safety switch.

OBSERVE

The act of making a visual examination.

ON-SITE WATER SUPPLY QUALITY

Water quality is based on the bacterial, chemical, mineral, and solids content of the water.

ON-SITE WATER SUPPLY QUANTITY

Water quantity is the rate of flow of water.

OPERATE

To cause systems or equipment to function.

PERMANENT WINDOWS AND DOORS

Windows and/or exterior doors that are designed to remain in their respective openings year round.

READILY OPENABLE ACCESS PANEL

A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that has removable or operable fasteners or latch devices in order to be lifted off, swung open, or otherwise removed by one person, and its edges and fasteners are not painted in place. This definition is limited to those panels within normal reach or from a 4-foot step-ladder, and which are not blocked by stored items, furniture, or building components.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, tennis courts, playground equipment, and other exercise, entertainment, or athletic facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER

For multiple identical components such as windows and electric outlets - one such component in each room for the interior components and one on each side of the building for the exterior components.

ROOF DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Gutters, downspouts, leaders, splash blocks, and similar components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

SAFETY GLAZING

Tempered glass, laminated glass, or rigid plastic.

SHUT DOWN

A piece of equipment or a system is shut down when it cannot be operated by the device or control that a home owner should normally use to operate it. If its safety switch or circuit breaker is in the "off" position, or its fuse is missing or blown, the inspector is not required to re-establish the circuit for the purpose of operating the equipment or system.

SOLID FUEL HEATING DEVICE

Any wood, coal, or other similar organic fuel burning device, including but not limited to fireplaces whether masonry or factory-built, fireplace inserts and stoves, wood stoves, central furnaces, and combinations of these devices.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENT

A component which supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads.)

SYSTEM

A combination of interacting or interdependent components, assembled to carry out one or more functions.

TECHNICALLY EXHAUSTIVE

An inspection is technically exhaustive when it involves the extensive use of measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, and other means to develop scientific or engineering findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

UNDERFLOOR CRAWL SPACE

The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the lowest floor structural component.

UNDERGROUND ITEMS

A system or a component buried underground, inside or outside of the property, and which is not accessible without digging or without using specialized tools or equipment.



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CODE OF ETHICS

Honesty, justice, and courtesy form a moral philosophy which, associated with mutual interest among people constitutes the foundation of ethics. The members recognise such a standard, not just by passive observance, but as a set of dynamic principles guiding their conduct. It is their duty to practice the profession according to this code of ethics.

The keystone of professional conduct is integrity. The members will discharge their duties with fidelity to the public, to their clients, and with fairness and impartiality to all. They should uphold the honour and dignity of their profession and avoid association with any enterprise of questionable character, and avoid any conflict of interest.

The inspector shall maintain high standards in matters affecting the safety, health and well being of the public. If during the course of an inspection, the inspector discovers a situation which may be harmful to the public, he shall inform the proper authorities and the people concerned.

Duties of all members :

1. The member will express an opinion only when it is based on practical experience and honest conviction.
2. The member will always act in good faith toward each client and the public.
3. The member will not disclose any information concerning the results of the inspection without the approval of the clients or their representatives.
4. The member will not accept any compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one interested party for the same service without the consent of all interested parties.
5. The member will not accept nor offer commissions or allowances, directly or indirectly, from or to other parties dealing with a client in connection with work for which the member is responsible.
6. The member will promptly disclose to his client any interest in a business which may affect the client. The member will not allow an interest in any business to affect the quality or results of his inspection work which he may be called upon to perform.
7. The inspection work may not be used as a vehicle by the home inspector to obtain additional work in another field deliberately.
8. The inspector will abstain from recommending or endorsing a specific company or individual for the purpose of repairs, renovations, construction or maintenance; he may however propose to his clients, a selection of companies (three or more) if requested by the client.
9. A member shall make every effort to maintain and improve the professional integrity and reputation of the home inspection profession. He will report any relevant information concerning possible violations of this code by other members of the Association for remedial action.
10. The member shall give credit where it belongs and will acknowledge the person or persons having accomplished the professional act in question.
11. The building inspection will, to the best of his ability, help in the improvement of his profession.