

**GUIDELINES ON IMPLEMENTING  
THE PROTOCOL FOR CONFERRING A NATIONAL DESIGNATION ON NEW  
HOME BUILDERS AND RENOVATORS**

Prepared for  
**Canadian Home Builders' Association**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

As part of its effort to develop a possible National Designation Program for New Home Builders and Renovators, the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) commissioned the development of a Protocol that specifies conditions and procedures to ensure the credibility of the National Designation. Representatives of the National Education and Advisory Committee (NETAC) reviewed the proposed Protocol on November 1, 2006 and raised two key questions related to compliance with the Protocol:

- Who would determine whether the requirements of the Protocol were met?
- What would be deemed to be evidence of compliance with the Protocol?

### Approach

CHBA commissioned a consultant to examine these questions and develop guidelines on how to comply with and implement the Protocol. The work involved a review of the Protocol with selected educators and an analysis of practices of other organizations that have education programs as part of their member certification process. It also involved interviews with selected representatives of provincial housing organizations with interest in a National Designation Program.

### Results of Analysis

- The reviews with selected educators and analysis of educational practices of selected organizations suggest that a variety of measures are being used to achieve credible industry education programs.
- The examination of education practices of selected organizations shows that each level has defined and complementary responsibilities in the development and delivery of education programs for their prospective members, and that they work cooperatively to achieve the education requirements and standards desired by the organizations.
- Reviews of the Protocol with individuals interested in provincial home builders' association certification programs confirm the appropriateness of the Protocol concept and elements, support entrusting provincial home builders' associations with responsibility for certifying the compliance of their certification programs with the Protocol, and support the utilization of an external entity to ensure the compliance of home builders' association certification programs with the Protocol, if the entity has the required expertise.

### Conclusions

The analysis suggests the following answers to the two key questions posed above:

- In the near term, the provincial home builders' associations that certify new home builder and renovator programs should be entrusted to determine whether the Protocol was met. In the longer term, an external authority could be established to determine (or help to determine along with provincial certifying associations) compliance of Provincial certification programs with the Protocol. **This should only occur if the external authority has expertise to enable it to perform the required functions. A limit on this approach for cost reasons is that an external authority should only be established if a number of provincial associations actively pursue the National Designation program.**
- A variety of measures can be used to develop credible courses, deliver courses and develop credible exams.

## INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) has taken a number of steps to enable the implementation of a National Designation Program for New Home Builders and Renovators. In 2005, it commissioned a project to develop an educational Benchmark for the designation and in June 2006, the CHBA Board of Directors approved it. CHBA then commissioned a project to develop a Protocol that specifies conditions and procedures to ensure the credibility of the National Designation under prescribed conditions.

The Protocol identified three critical elements of the education process: course development, course delivery and examinations, and specified requirements to achieve credibility for each. The main prescribed condition set by CHBA was that CHBA will not create a parallel system of courses, delivery arrangements and examinations to existing provincial new home builder and renovator certification programs. This means that a CHBA National Designation will only be granted to individuals who have met provincial certification programs that meet requirements of the Protocol.

The proposed Protocol was circulated for review by selected CHBA members, including, in particular, provincial representatives of the National Education and Training Committee (NETAC) and discussed at a meeting of these representatives on November 1. They made several comments and asked several questions about the Protocol, and as a result, recommended a minor amendment to it. The amendment added the following words to Section 6.4 Implementation Issues: "It also requires the development of conditions and procedures to establish credibility requirements in consultation with provincial home builders' associations." The amendment reflected reviewers' desire for guidelines on how to implement the Protocol and comply with it. In particular, reviewers sought responses to two key questions raised by Section 6.2 of the proposed Protocol, Evidence of Compliance:

- Who would determine whether the requirements of the Protocol were met?
- What would be deemed to be evidence of compliance with the Protocol?

The amended Protocol was approved unanimously by the Board of Directors at its meeting on November 5.

**This report documents the objective of the work: to respond to the questions raised and to develop guidelines on how to comply with and implement the Protocol.**

## APPROACH

A two-phase work plan was carried out. The first phase reviewed the Protocol with selected educators and a person familiar with the practices used in Québec where the licensing system includes an extensive education requirement for building contractors. The rationale for this phase was to obtain the reaction of people with experience and expertise in the field of industry education. While the Protocol was based on credible references, it had not been assessed by educators. The second phase reviewed the Protocol with selected representatives of NETAC from provinces offering new home builder and/or renovator certification programs<sup>1</sup> as well as other interested relevant individuals, taking into account advice from educational experts and questions that were raised in the November 1 meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Provincial home builders' associations in the following provinces offer certification programs for their new home builder and/or renovator members: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

## Details of Phase 1 Work

- Senior members of three relevant educational institutions agreed to provide comments on the protocol: two from George Brown College in Toronto, one from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary and one from Camosun College in Victoria. Each was provided with background information on the Benchmark, the Protocol and outstanding issues. Interviews were then held with them to solicit their views on the Protocol, focusing on its merit and measures for effective course development, training and examination.
- Some education experts referred to the practices of other occupations/professions with respect to educating and certifying members of their organizations, and provided leads to them to allow an examination of their practices. As a result, practices of the following organizations were examined:
  - Canadian Institute of Quality Surveyors (CIQS)
  - Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT), its standing committee, the Canadian Technology Accreditation Board (CTAB) and the BC affiliate of CCTT, Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC)
  - Various organizations responsible for architectural education: Canadian Architectural Certification Board (CACB), the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC), etc.

In addition, a brief interview was conducted with the head of the Residential Construction Industry Training Organization (RCITO).

One education expert referred to private training organizations as a resource to explore ideas and a potential vehicle for education. As a result, reference materials for these institutions in the five provinces offering new home builder and renovator certifications were identified and reviewed. Representatives of regulatory authorities governing these institutions were also interviewed<sup>2</sup>.

- A consultant who has extensive experience in training members of the housing industry and who is familiar with practices in Québec was asked a wide range of questions about housing industry education there, focusing on how courses are developed and approved and by whom, how courses are delivered and by whom, and how examinations are developed, approved and marked and by whom.

## Details of Phase 2 Work

Once the responses of Phase 1 interviewees and the reviews of documents identified in Phase 1 were complete, selected representatives of provincial home builders' associations or others involved in provincial certification programs were interviewed. The interviews focused on four issues, and were influenced by the insights from the Phase 1 work.

- Opinions about interest in/demand for a National Designation Program for New Home Builders and Renovators
- Acceptability and appropriateness of the concepts and elements of the Protocol

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<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the following organizations were interviewed: Private Career Training Institutions Agency of British Columbia, Private Institutions Branch, Alberta Advance Education, Private Vocational Schools Unit, Saskatchewan Learning, Private Vocational Institutions, Manitoba Advance Education and Literacy, and Private Career Colleges, Nova Scotia Department of Education.

- Validity of entrusting provincial housing associations with responsibility for certifying compliance or non-compliance of their certification programs with the Protocol
- Appropriateness and/or necessity of utilizing an external authority to ensure credibility of provincial certification programs by confirming their compliance with the Protocol through various functions such as audits or the assumption of responsibility for some functions included in the Protocol.

## **RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES**

This section presents the amalgamated opinions of people interviewed and the results of documents analyzed. The opinions of individuals are not identified; nor are the results of analyzing individual reports necessarily reported. Rather, the results presented below represent a synthesis of opinions and analysis.

The results of opinions on and analysis of alternate education approaches to and roles for different levels of the Association in implementing the Protocol are presented first.

### **Value of and Role for Industry and Educational Institutions**

The Protocol referred repeatedly to the use of accredited educational institutions as one method for achieving credible course development, course delivery and examinations. Results of probing the effectiveness of this approach and alternate approaches are summarized below:

- Some educators cited specific values of using accredited educational institutions in industry education programs, such as quality assurance and value for money. These results are claimed to accrue from educators' ability to package learning materials effectively, i.e., on the basis of learning outcomes, which aids course development work, focuses trainers and helps to identify relevant questions for examinations. Expert educators also have the ability to structure the learning material to teach, and structure the exams to test, the types of competencies required.
- Some commentators noted that educational institutions take a significant time to develop new courses and are inclined not to be aware of current industry practices, and that their courses may be too academic for industry practitioners.
- The approach used in Québec can be characterized as a team or balanced approach, in which the development of courses and examinations reflect input from industry subject-matter experts, and insights from educators on how to present the material for effective learning and test how well the students learned the material. Similarly, course delivery is done by people who are recognized to have subject-matter expertise and instructional skills. People who do this work are reportedly selected on the basis of factors such as their experience, recognized expertise and reputation for the knowledge and skills required.
- Many private training organizations exist in Canada. In each of the five provinces examined (those in which home builders' associations offer certification programs), those organizations are regulated by the provincial government to varying degrees. Those in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia must be registered. In Alberta, programs are licensed. British Columbia is the only province that will accredit such organizations, if specified conditions are met. Registration, accreditation and

licensing are the techniques used by provinces to control the quality and/or credibility of such organizations. Based on a review of current programs and courses, most of these private training institutions do not appear to be able to assume responsibility for the provision and/or delivery of courses to achieve a National Designation in the near term. However, one interviewee from an organization that regulates private training institutions expressed the opinion that some have the capability and, if demand existed, they could respond. Also, one home builders' association currently engages a private training organization to deliver its programs because of that organization's capabilities. Further, some of these organizations are large and operate in a number of provinces. This offers a potential opportunity for some standardization in the development and delivery of new home builder and renovation education programs, if the relevant organizations are shown to have relevant capabilities and interest in this type of work.

**The comments above suggest that a number of measures are being used to achieve credible education programs.**

### **Roles of Various Levels of Selected Organizations**

Most of the organizations reviewed in this study had two levels: a national level and provincial affiliates or a provincial level and regional level. The practices of selected organizations in allocating roles in the process of educating their prospective members between organizational levels are summarized below.

#### Canadian Institute of Quality Surveyors (CIQS)

The CIQS currently offers two levels of certification. The system has evolved for about 50 years. In general, the division of education-related responsibilities between the national and provincial affiliate levels is as follows:

- The national level carries out the following tasks: sets standards for accreditation of programs, develops and updates courses, certifies individuals, develops and administers examinations. Colleges/institutes also deliver the courses if CIQS has accredited the courses or programs.
- The provincial affiliates carry out the following tasks: assesses individuals in terms of the credits they have relative to the national standards, and sets remaining requirements for certification; recommends individuals for certification when they have met stated requirements; assesses courses offered by educational institutions to determine whether they meet the CIQS requirements of individual courses (CIQS sometimes performs this task to help the affiliate).

This analysis shows that each level has distinct and complementary responsibilities, and that the levels work cooperatively.

#### Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT)

The CCTT offers various levels of certification. The system has evolved for about 25 years. In general, the division of education-related responsibilities between the national and provincial affiliate levels is as follows:

- The national level carries out the following tasks: develops educational outcomes; accredits educational programs delivered by educational agencies.

- The provincial affiliates carry out the following tasks: certifies individuals and recommends upgrades where necessary; assesses individuals' course selections and advises them on their sufficiency to meet certification requirements.

This analysis shows that each level has distinct and complementary responsibilities, and that the levels work cooperatively.

### Education Practices as Part of the Building Contractor Licensing System in Québec

Building contractors must complete specified education requirements to obtain the type of license they apply for. Some parts of the licensing system are implemented by Régie du bâtiment du Québec, a department of the provincial government, and other parts are implemented by various industry associations. A summary of responsibilities of each of these parties is presented below:

- The Régie carries out the following tasks: develops required competencies; develops exams (including banks of questions) and administers those exams taken by contractors who decide to challenge the exam without taking the relevant courses; assesses all courses developed by the Associations and approves or rejects them; assesses exams developed by the Associations and approves or rejects them.
- The Associations carry out the following tasks: develops courses based on the statement of required competencies; delivers courses; develops and administers examinations taken by license applicants who take required course materials.

### Practices Governing the Education of Architects

The roles of various organizations in establishing, delivering and assuring the quality of architectural education were also analyzed. The analysis indicated that it is done mostly by national level organizations and universities<sup>3</sup>, and the findings are not very relevant to this study.

**The examination of education practices by the above-noted organizations shows that each level has defined and complementary responsibilities in the development and delivery of an education program for their prospective members, and that they work cooperatively to achieve the education requirements and standards desired by the organizations.**

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<sup>3</sup> The organization at the national level most involved in setting and maintaining educational standards is the Canadian Architectural Certification Board (CACB). The CACB has two functions: accreditation of schools of architecture and certification of graduates' education. The accreditation process requires the application of 12 criteria: 1) programme response to CACB perspectives, 2) programmed self-assessment, 3) public information, 4) social equity, 5) human resources, 6) human resource development, 7) physical resources, 8) information resources, 9) financial resources, 10) administrative structure, 11) professional degrees and curriculum and 12) student performance criteria (37 sub-criteria). The examination to become an architect, referred to as Architect Registration Exam (ARE) is developed and administered by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), a body comprised representing 55 architectural associations in the US and Canada. The RAIC reportedly administers the Syllabus curriculum. The RAIC is making arrangements to have the courses developed, delivered and examined through Athabasca University. The courses reflect the Canadian Education Standard for admission to provincial architectural associations in Canada.

## RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED OR INTERESTED IN PROVINCIAL HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Interviewee responses to the issues probed were fairly consistent for most of them. A summary of responses is presented below:

Issue	Response
Perceived interest in and value of a National Designation	In this case, opinions were mixed. Some expressed the view that demand was low because demand for builder mobility is low or not an issue. Some thought that it was a valuable concept but did not provide a rationale for this opinion. Another view was that the Benchmark developed in support of the National Designation Program was valuable in itself because it provided a guide for provincial certifying associations to upgrade their programs.
Appropriateness of the Protocol concept and elements	All respondents supported the Protocol concept and elements. Some supported it because of the need for credibility of a National Designation Program. Others supported the Protocol because of its utility as a guide for upgrading provincial home builders' association certification programs.
Validity of entrusting provincial home building certifying organizations with responsibility for certifying compliance of their certification programs with the Protocol	All respondents supported the idea of allocating this responsibility to provincial home building certifying programs. Some doubt was expressed about the capacity and willingness of some organizations to be rigorous and objective in assessing their own programs. Other opinions noted the diligence of some organizations in developing and applying criteria to help ensure the credibility of their programs. Most opinions were conditional on the Protocol incorporating some flexibility in the measures used to ensure credibility of courses, course delivery and examinations (similar to the flexibility and logic/sensibility of the approach used in the Québec licensing system).
Appropriateness and/or necessity of utilizing an external authority to ensure credibility of provincial certification programs by confirming compliance with the Protocol through various functions such as audits or the assumption of responsibility for some functions included in the Protocol.	All respondents supported this idea, more particularly the audit functions on one condition: that the external authority must have the expertise to carry out the responsibility assigned. The common reason for support of this idea was the desire for credibility of provincial certification programs through confirmation of their compliance with the Protocol. Ideas on the nature of the external authority varied. Some thought that it could be an independent authority established by the CHBA national office. Another idea was that it could be an independent authority set up by provincial home builders' associations – a pan-provincial authority – reflecting the common wishes of the associations. Another idea about the establishment of an independent "oversight" authority was that this should be done on an "as able" basis. For example, as the concept of the National Designation is implemented, oversight expertise may be developed incrementally, and accordingly, it should be applied incrementally, e.g., spot checks on some functions where independent expertise is developed.

## CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROTOCOL

As noted previously, comments by provincial NETAC representatives raised two key questions when they discussed the proposed Protocol on November 1, 2006:

- Who would determine whether the requirements of the Protocol were met?
- What would be deemed to be evidence of compliance?

The analysis carried out in this study suggests answers to those questions:

## Party Confirming Compliance with the Protocol

In the near term, the provincial home builders' associations that certify new home builder and renovator programs should be entrusted to determine whether the Protocol was met (they are also the only organizations that exist to carry out this function).

In the longer term, an external authority could be established to determine (or help to determine along with provincial certifying associations) compliance of Provincial certification programs with the Protocol. **This should only occur if the external authority has expertise to enable it to perform the required functions. A limit on this approach for cost reasons is that an external authority should only be established if a number of provincial associations actively pursue the National Designation Program.**

The national level of CHBA or provincial home builders' associations involved in implementing the National Designation Program (a pan-provincial authority) could establish this entity. It could theoretically implement two types of functions:

- **Audit functions:** This could include some or all of the following audit functions<sup>4</sup>.
  - Audit the courses and approve or reject.
  - Audit the training and approve or reject.
  - Audit the exams and approve or reject.
  - Check whether the students took the courses and passed the exams.
- **Development functions:** This could include some or all of the following functions:
  - Refine/update the Benchmark.
  - Re-express the Benchmark in terms of learning objectives and outcomes for courses on some or all of the 11 topics of the Benchmark.
  - Develop courses (this is not a favoured model).
  - Develop prototypical exams.
  - Administer exams.

The possible list of functions does not include course development or delivery. These are deemed to be functions most appropriately allocated to provincial certifying associations.

## Evidence of Compliance with the Protocol

The following guidelines on acceptable measures of credibility of the Protocol refer to the three elements of the Protocol and are based on the workable options identified in other organizations.

- **Measures to develop credible courses:**
  - Courses developed by accredited public or private educational institutions
  - Courses developed by an industry-led “team” groups comprised of industry subject-matter experts and educators with relevant expertise
  - Courses developed by consultants who are reputable in this field, i.e., have appropriate credentials, relevant experience and a good, well recognized reputation

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<sup>4</sup> The first three items relate to the first bullet of Section 6.2 of the Protocol; the fourth item relates to the second bullet of Section 6.2 of the Protocol.

- Courses developed by an oversight authority, e.g., a pan-provincial group with recognized expertise and capacity
- **Measures to achieve credible course delivery:**
  - Courses delivered by accredited public or private educational institutions
  - Courses delivered by instructors with recognized subject matter expertise and credentialed or demonstrated instructional skills
- **Measures to develop credible examinations:**
  - Examinations developed by accredited public or private educational institutions
  - Examinations developed by an industry-led “team” groups comprised of industry subject-matter experts and educators with relevant expertise
  - Examinations developed by consultants who have appropriate credentials, relevant experience and a good, well recognized reputation
  - Examinations developed by an oversight authority, e.g., a pan-provincial group with recognized expertise and capacity.