

**NATIONAL BUILDING
INSPECTORS AND EXPERTS
ASSOCIATION**



**Standards of Practice
for Building Inspections,
recognized by the OACIQ**

(l'Organisme d'autoréglementation du courtage immobilier du Québec)

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PREAMBLE

The form entitled "Declarations by the seller of the immovable" is obligatory and has been since July 1, 2012. This form must be used in a sales transaction by a physical person on all real estate transactions mainly residential, with less than 5 units, including the immovable held as a divided or undivided co-ownership. This duly completed document must be made available to the home inspector, who must become acquainted with it in order to know all information relevant to his inspection.

The visual inspection together with the written report need not deal with compliance regarding building codes, or with standards and regulations governing the construction industry and the health and safety industry, or with standards and regulations governing building insurability for any insurance risks.

As the visual inspection is being performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice the inspection is not technically exhaustive, the inspector must recommend that a technically exhaustive inspection be performed by a specialist when a sufficiently high number of potentially important indications are identified that allow him to conclude that a deficiency or potentially important defect may affect a system or component of the building.

CHAPTER I – STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Section I – Scope

Art. 1. These Standards of Practice apply to the inspection of part or all of a mainly residential immovable containing less than five (5) dwellings.

Section II – Obligation of Agreement

Art. 2. An inspection of part or all of a chiefly residential immovable containing less than five (5) dwellings, including an immovable held as a divided or undivided co-ownership, must first be the subject of a service agreement with the minimum content outlined in the model agreement approved and acknowledged by the OACIQ.(Organisme d'autoreglementation du courtage immobilier du Quebec).

Section III – Objectives of Standards

Art. 3. The objectives of these Standards of Practice are to:

- 1° provide minimum guidelines regarding building inspections;
- 2° make public the services provided by private fee-paid inspectors;
- 3° define certain terms related to building inspections;
- 4° provide guidelines to standardize the presentation of inspection reports in accordance with the Standards of Practice.

Section IV – Interpretation

Art. 4. Unless otherwise indicated by context, the definitions contained in Schedule 1 are an integral part of these standards.

Art. 5. Unless otherwise indicated by context, masculine shall include feminine and vice-versa, and singular shall include plural and vice-versa.

CHAPTER II – GENERALITIES AS THEY APPLY TO BUILDING INSPECTIONS

Section I – Purpose of Building Inspection

Art. 6. The purpose of a building inspection performed in accordance with these Standards is to provide a client with a better understanding of the condition of a building as observed at the time of the inspection.

Section II – Performance of Building Inspection

§1 Visual examination

Art. 7. A building inspection is a visual inspection and is not technically exhaustive.

Art. 8. A building inspection includes a visual examination of the systems and components installed that are readily accessible as outlined in these Standards of Practice.

§2 Services not included in a building inspection

Art. 9. When performing a building inspection, the inspector is not required to:

- 1° offer or provide a service prohibited by a law or code of ethics;
- 2° offer warranties or guarantees of any kind;
- 3° calculate the mechanical strength, adequacy or efficiency of any system or component;
- 4° enter any area of a building or perform any procedure which may damage the property or its components or be dangerous to the inspector or other persons;
- 5° operate any system or component which is shut down or otherwise inoperable without risk;
- 6° operate any system or component which does not respond to normal operating controls;
- 7° move personal items, furniture, equipment, plant life, soil, snow, ice or debris which obstructs access or visibility;
- 8° confirm, analyze or voice an opinion on the presence or absence of any hazardous substance, including carcinogens or toxins, environmental risks or contaminants in air, soil or water;
- 9° determine the effectiveness of any system or component;
- 10° predict future conditions, including failure of components;
- 11° predict the future operating cost of a system or component;
- 12° evaluate acoustical characteristics of any system or component;
- 13° confirm the compliance or non-compliance of the building with current building codes and rules of application of such codes;
- 14° determine the presence of unstable or radioactive materials or any other element pertaining to the building that is not visible.

§3 Exclusion

Art. 10. Upon written request by the client, the inspection of certain systems or components included in the Standards of Practice may be excluded from the building inspection.

§4 Additional services

Art. 11. The building inspection may include additional inspection services upon written agreement to this effect.

Section III – Building Inspection Report

§1 Obligation of a written report

Art. 12. After analyzing the visual examination conducted, the inspector shall submit a written report to the client.

§2 Content of written report

Art. 13. The written report shall:

- 1° indicate the date, time, weather conditions and names of persons present at the inspection;
- 2° indicate the name of the person who requested the inspection and the purpose of the inspection;
- 3° describe the systems and components outlined in these standards;
- 4° identify which systems and components were actually inspected;
- 5° identify all systems and components that were not inspected and indicate reasons why they were not;
- 6° identify any systems or components requiring immediate or major repairs, including safety issues;
- 7° identify all elements that represent a dangerous situation and mention the inspector's obligation to advise all persons concerned in this matter;
- 8° notify the client of the repairs mentioned in 6° above and refer to attached unit cost chart if applicable;
- 9° provide contain photographs in support of certain pieces of information contained in the report.

Art. 14. The inspection report shall not include the following:

- 1° the life expectancy of any system or component;
- 2° the cause of the need for an immediate or major repair;
- 3° the method, materials and costs of corrections;
- 4° the suitability of the property for any specialized use;
- 5° compliance with building, zoning or land, use codes or regulations or any other codes or regulations, exceptions or servitudes;

- 6° the market value of the property;
- 7° the advisability or inadvisability of purchasing the property;
- 8° any system or component that was not observed;
- 9° the presence or absence of wood-damaging organisms, rodents, insects or other pests unless it is obvious;
- 10° any underground item;
- 11° any cosmetic item;
- 12° all supplemental heating devices.

§3 Additional information

Art. 15. The report may contain any other information, observation or description other than those required under article 13.

CHAPTER III – BUILDING INSPECTION PARTICULARS

Section I – Structural Components

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 16. The inspector shall examine structural components, including:

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

Art. 17. The inspector shall probe structural components where deterioration is suspected. However, probing is not required when probing would damage any finished surface.

Art. 18. The inspector shall enter under floor crawl spaces and attic spaces except when access is obstructed, when entry could damage the property, or when dangerous or adverse situations are suspected.

§2 Content of report

Art. 19. The inspector shall describe the type of:

- 1° foundation;
- 2° floor structure;

- 3° wall structure;
- 4° columns;
- 5° ceiling structure;
- 6° roof structure.

Art. 20. The inspector shall report the methods used to observe the floor crawl spaces and attics.

Art. 21. The inspector shall report all signs of water penetration into the building or any signs of abnormal condensation on building structural components.

Section II – Exterior

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 22. The inspector shall observe:

- 1° wall cladding, flashings and trim;
- 2° primary doors and windows;
- 3° garage door openers;
- 4° decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, railings, and basement light wells and windows;
- 5° eaves, soffits and fascias;
- 6° vegetation, grading, drainage, driveways, walkways and retaining walls in terms of their impact on the condition of the immovable.

Art. 23. The inspector is not required to observe:

- 1° storm windows, storm doors, screening, shutters, awnings and similar seasonal accessories;
- 2° fences;
- 3° safety glazing;
- 4° remote control transmitters for garage doors;
- 5° geological conditions;
- 6° soil conditions;
- 7° recreational facilities;
- 8° outbuildings other than garages and carports.

Art. 24. The inspector shall operate all primary doors, including garage doors, either manually or by using permanently installed controls of any garage door opener.

§2 Content of report

Art. 25. In his report, the inspector shall describe wall cladding materials.

Art. 26. In his report the inspector shall indicate whether or not any garage door opener will automatically reverse or stop when meeting reasonable resistance during closing.

Section III – Roofing

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 27. The inspector shall observe:

- 1° roof coverings;
- 2° roof drainage systems;
- 3° flashings;
- 4° skylights, chimneys and roof penetrations;
- 5° signs of leaks or abnormal condensation on building components and systems.

Art. 28. The inspector is not required to:

- 1° walk on the roofing;
- 2° observe attached accessories including but not limited to solar panels, antennae, lightning arrestors and similar accessories.

§2 Content of report

Art. 29. The inspector shall:

- 1° describe the type of roof covering materials;
- 2° report the methods used to observe the roofing.

Section IV – Plumbing

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 30. The inspector shall operate all plumbing fixtures and all faucets not attached to an appliance.

Art. 31. The inspector shall observe the interior water distribution system including:

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

Art. 32. The inspector shall observe the interior water drainage system including:

- 1° drains; waster and vent piping; piping supports;
- 2° leaks;
- 3° functional drainage.

Art. 33. The inspector shall observe the hot water system including:

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

Art. 34. The inspector shall observe the fuel storage and distribution systems including:

- 1° interior fuel storage equipment, supply piping, venting and supports;
- 2° leaks.

Art. 35. The inspector shall observe sump systems and components.

Art. 36. The inspector is not required to determine whether water supply and waste disposal systems are public or private.

Art. 37. The inspector is not required to operate:

- 1° automatic safety controls;
- 2° any valve except water closet flush valves, fixture faucets and hose faucets.

Art. 38. The inspector is not required to observe:

- 1° water conditioning systems;
- 2° fire sprinkler systems;
- 3° lawn sprinkler systems;
- 4° water supply quantity and quality;
- 5° waste disposal systems;
- 6° foundation drainage systems;
- 7° spas.

§2 Content of report

Art. 39. In his report the inspector shall describe:

- 1° water supply and distribution piping materials;
- 2° drain, waste and vent piping materials;

3° water heater equipment.

Art. 40. The inspector is not required to state the effectiveness of anti-siphon devices.

Section V – Electrical

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 41. The inspector shall observe:

- 1° service entrance conductors;
- 2° service equipment, grounding equipment, main over current device, main and distribution panels;
- 3° amperage and voltage ratings of the service;
- 4° branch circuit conductors, their over current devices, and the compatibility of their amperages and voltages;
- 5° the operation of a representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches and receptacles located inside or outside the immovable;
- 6° the polarity and grounding of all receptacles within:
 - six feet of interior plumbing fixtures in the garage or carport and on the exterior of inspected structures;
- 7° the operation of ground fault circuit interrupters;
- 8° the main service box (protective device and location);
- 9° the main and secondary distribution panels (protective device, posted capacity, location);
- 10° the inspector must open main service boxes and distribution panels when it is safe to do so. If he cannot open this equipment, he shall indicate the reasons in his inspection report.

Art. 42. The inspector is not required to insert any tool, probe or testing device inside the panels.

Art. 43. The inspector is not required to test or operate any over current protective devices except ground fault circuit interrupters.

Art. 44. The inspector is not required to dismantle an electrical device or control.

Art. 45. The inspector is not required to observe:

- 1° low voltage systems;
- 2° smoke detectors;
- 3° telephone, security, cable TV, intercoms, or other ancillary wiring that is not a part of the primary electrical distribution system.

§2 Content of report

Art. 46. The inspector shall describe:

- 1° service amperage and voltage;
- 2° service entry conductor materials;
- 3° service type (overhead or underground);
- 4° location of main and distribution panels.

Art. 47. The inspector shall report any observed aluminum branch circuit wiring.

Section VI – Heating

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 48. The inspector shall observe permanently installed heating systems including:

- 1° heating equipment, including heat pump;
- 2° normal operating controls;
- 3° automatic safety controls;
- 4° the exterior of chimneys, flues and vents;
- 5° heat distribution systems including fans, pumps, ducts, piping, radiators, convectors, registers and air filters;
- 6° the number of permanent heat sources and the presence of an installed heat source in each room.

Art. 49. The inspector shall operate the systems using normal operating controls.

Art. 50. The inspector shall open readily openable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.

Art. 51. The inspector is not required to operate heating systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage nor operate automatic safety controls.

Art. 52. The inspector is not required to observe:

- 1° solid fuel heating devices;
- 2° the interior of chimneys, flues and vents, and heating equipment;
- 3° humidifiers;
- 4° electronic air filters;
- 5° the uniformity or adequacy of heat supply to the various rooms.

§2 Content of report

Art. 53. The inspector shall describe:

- 1° energy source;
- 2° heating equipment and distribution type.

Section VII – Central Air Conditioning

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 54. The inspector shall operate the systems using normal operating controls.

Art. 55. The inspector shall open readily openable access panels provided by the manufacturer or installer for routine homeowner maintenance.

Art. 56. The inspector shall observe central air conditioning including:

- 1° cooling and air handling equipment including heat pump;
- 2° normal operating controls.

Art. 57. The inspector shall observe distribution systems including:

- 1° ducts, registers and air filters;
- 2° the number of installed cooling sources and the presence of an installed cooling source in each room.

Art. 58. The inspector is not required to operate cooling systems when weather conditions or other circumstances may cause equipment damage.

Art. 59. The inspector is not required to observe non-central air conditioners.

Art. 60. The inspector is not required to observe:

- 1° the uniformity or adequacy of cool-air supply to the various rooms;
- 2° components that are not visually accessible without dismantling.

§2 Content of report

Art. 61. The inspector shall describe:

- 1° energy sources;
- 2° cooling equipment type.

Section VIII – Interior

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 62. The inspector shall observe:

- 1° walls, ceiling and floors;
- 2° steps, stairways, balconies and railings;
- 3° cabinets and countertops;
- 4° doors and windows including hardware;
- 5° separation walls, ceilings, and doors between a dwelling unit and an attached garage or another dwelling unit;
- 6° sumps.

Art. 63. The inspector shall operate a representative number of primary windows and interior doors.

Art. 64. The inspector is not required to observe:

- 1° paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments on the interior walls, ceilings, and floors;
- 2° carpeting;
- 3° draperies, blinds or other window treatments;
- 4° household appliances;
- 5° recreational facilities.

§2 Content of report

Art. 65. The inspector shall report signs of water penetration into the building or signs of abnormal or harmful condensation on building components. Furthermore, he must report all apparent traces of mould observed inside the building. If applicable, the inspector must use a moisture detector to confirm or refute the presence of moisture in suspected areas only.

Section IX – Insulation and Ventilation

§1 Scope of inspection

Art. 66. The inspector shall observe:

- 1° insulation in unfinished crawl spaces and foundations;
- 2° ventilation of crawl spaces and basement;
- 3° ventilation system equipment;
- 4° kitchen, bathroom, and laundry exhaust fans.

§2 Content of report

Art. 67. The inspector shall describe insulation materials and vapor barriers in unfinished spaces.

Art. 68. The inspector is not required to report on:

- 1° concealed insulation and vapor barriers;
- 2° venting equipment which is integral to household appliances.

ANNEX 1 – GLOSSARY

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 and which is not plugged into an electrical outlet.

CLIENT

Person or organization for whom the report is prepared.

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.

COSMETIC OR NON-PERMANENT ITEM

Any individual item or accessory that is not part of or is not essential to a system or component of the immovable or its operation, including alarm systems, motion detecting or decorative lighting systems, antennae, lightning arrestors, flags or others.

CROSS CONNECTION

Any physical connection or arrangement between potable water and any source of contamination.

DANGEROUS OR ADVERSE CONDITIONS

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

DESCRIBE

Report in writing a system or component by its type and other observed characteristics in sufficient detail to distinguish it from other components used for the same purpose.

DISMANTLE

To 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 breakage.

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

Repair which, if it is not made immediately, could cause a deterioration of this or another component or system, or endanger the safety of the immovable's occupants.

INSPECTOR

A 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 to the building itself or to the plumbing, mechanical or electrical systems such that the installed item requires tools for removal.

MAJOR REPAIR

Repair that is important as to its nature, cost and consequences if not made.

NORMAL OPERATING CONTROLS

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

OBSERVE

The act of making a visual examination.

OPERATE

To cause a system or device to function.

PRIMARY DOORS AND WINDOWS

Windows and exterior doors which are designed to remain in the respective openings year round.

READILY OPENABLE ACCESS PANEL

A panel provided for homeowner inspection or maintenance which 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. 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 physical activity or entertainment facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

One component per room for multiple identical components such as windows and electrical outlets. One component on each side of the building for multiple identical exterior components.

ROOF DRAINAGE SYSTEM

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

SAFETY GLAZING

Tempered glass, laminated glass or plastic material.

SHUT DOWN

A piece of equipment or a system is shut down when it cannot be operated by the device or control which a homeowner would 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 factorybuilt, fireplace inserts or stove, woodstoves, central furnaces, etc.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENT

A component of the immovable which supports interior or exterior cladding or other components of the immovable.

SUPPLEMENTAL HEATING DEVICE

Any device or accessory added to the main heating system to provide supplemental heat or remedy the main system in case of failure. Supplemental heat includes, but is not limited to, any stove or fireplace using any type of fuel or energy source.

SYSTEM

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

TECHNICALLY EXHAUSTIVE

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

UNDER FLOOR OR CRAWL SPACE

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

UNDERGROUND ITEM

Any system or component buried underground inside or outside the buildings, including sewers, foundation drain or oil tank that cannot be accessed without digging or the use of a specialized tool.

WATER QUALITY

Quality of water supplied to the premises. It is based on the bacterial, chemical, mineral and solids content of the water.

WATER SUPPLY QUANTITY

Quantity of water supplied to the premises. It is based on the rate of flow of water.

November 5th, 2012