

What to Expect

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Independent Home Inspector**

Many people view home inspectors as responsible for making the final decision in the house purchase process. They think their role is to give approval and want to hear "This is a great house. I recommend you buy it" from the inspector. This couldn't be further from the truth. The intent of this column is to clarify the role of the home inspector in the residential housing industry and provide a set of reasonable expectations of any inspector that you hire.

When you hire a professional home inspector, you are doing so to provide you with adequate knowledge to allow you to make an informed decision. Whether purchasing a new home, a re-sale home or providing a warranty inspection, home inspection is recommended to ensure that you are aware of every aspect of the building, how building systems function, and the impact they have on you and your family. The process should be viewed as educational and informative. You should feel comfortable in asking as many questions as you need.

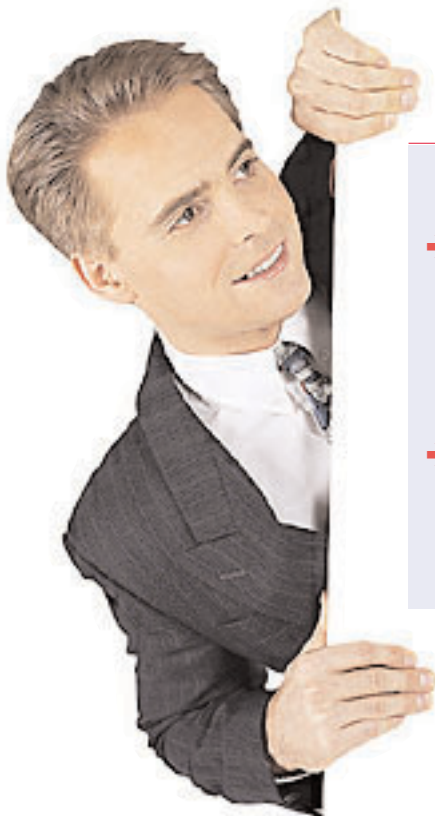
The Home Inspection industry is one that is not currently regulated by the government. As a result different inspection companies may perform their jobs to varying degrees of detail. Any inspector you hire should perform to a minimum set of standards as set out by the Canadian Association of Property and Home Inspectors (CAPHI). This ensures that all major components of the building system are inspected and that the procedures used are consistent with a national process.

The inspectors are limited to what they visually observe on the specific day and time of the inspection. It is a common misconception that inspectors should know what is behind walls, under carpets, or hidden in ceilings. In fact they cannot move or remove any permanent component of the building during the inspection process. The inspectors can only report on what they see, so if there is furniture, appliances, or a garage full of debris blocking access, inspectors are not required to move them or report on those areas. A copy of both the standards and a list of the inspectors' limitations on that day need to be provided so that you fully understand what to expect.

The basic inspection report should include investigation of the exterior, roof, structure, electrical, heating, cooling, plumbing, insulation, ventilation, and interior. In addition your inspector may be qualified to provide a report on well and septic systems, fireplaces, indoor air quality, pools, and pests. These inspections require specific training and are provided as a separate service. It is important to note that most inspectors are not professional engineers or contractors and as such should not make specific recommendations or provide costs for remediation on suspected major structural concerns. A good inspector will refer these concerns to a third party expert to determine the correct course of action.

Now that we have provided a list of expectations, let's discuss what to expect when you meet your home inspector on site. How a home inspector interacts with you can vary. Some clearly explain the process including what to expect, how long the inspection should take, their limitations and how the report works before proceeding. Some allow you to accompany them through each step while others request time to complete all or parts of the inspection before reviewing their findings with you. Either method is acceptable and purely a matter of preference. You should however ask the inspector when you do your research which method they use. Remember you need to be comfortable with the process so that you get the most out of it.

In our next column we will begin where we begin; on the exterior of the building. I'll tell you some of the things we look for, how we report them and give you some hints to help you pass a home inspection if you are selling. Send your comments and questions to: info@bookahomeinspection.com.



HOUSE TIPS

- **Replace all worn or damaged caulking around exterior doors and windows as well as around trim.**
- **Protect all exterior wood trim with environmentally friendly latex primer and paint.**

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