

Professional home inspectors can save buyers money

Everyone knows how to buy a home. You look at real estate ads, get shown houses by a realtor, negotiate a purchase price, then have your lawyer prepare the paperwork.

In Ontario, home buyers are increasingly adding another crucial step to make sure all the other efforts pay off.

They are getting professional home inspections.

To eager buyers the home may

look like their dream house, but a qualified home inspector can advise them the furnace won't make it through another winter. Or the roof will need replacing within two years. Or the wiring is inadequate. Or the basement is prone to flooding.

Or a thousand and one other details which the untrained eye cannot detect but which will greatly affect the buyers' appreciation of the house - and their

pocketbooks - for years to come.

Few consumers heard of home inspections a decade ago, let alone made an inspection a condition of purchasing a house.

But public interest has grown dramatically every year since then as the obvious advantages of pre-purchase home inspections have become recognized.

Over 10,000 inspections were performed in Ontario last year, estimate home inspectors. In some areas, over 50 per cent of all resale homes are inspected.

The rapid maturing of this new profession has been aided by the development of the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors which includes the most reputable home inspection firms

in the province.

"This field is largely unregulated - and so the association has taken steps to ensure professionalism in the marketplace," says OAH president Jeff Clarke.

Clarke advises consumers, realtors and lawyers to work only with inspection firms that are accredited by the OAH.

Under Canadian law, few qualifications are required in order to call oneself a "home inspector," although OAH inspectors typically have an engineering, building or architecture background.

Firms accredited by the OAH, however, must pass a series of written examinations on home in-

spection and serve a one-year apprenticeship.

OAH members must also follow the association's strict Standards of Practice, which set out in detail the minimum components of a home inspection, as well as a Code of Ethics which demands honest conduct and objective inspections in the interests of the client.

This self-regulation of the industry and other efforts to improve and maintain the qualifications of their profession has helped win home inspectors a high reputation across Ontario.

Not only among home buyers - but also with home sellers.

Many vendors have come to recognize the value of having an inspection carried out before putting a house on the market. If problems are discovered, they can be cleared up before potential buyers examine the house and raise embarrassing questions.

If the house gets a clean bill, a motivated seller knows the advantage of having a reliable, independent report available for buyers' perusal.

Home inspectors have also won over other professionals. Today lawyers and real estate agents often advise their clients to make inspections part of their offers to purchase. Appraisers also call on professional inspectors to evaluate conditions identified during house appraisals. Relocation companies use inspection firms to check the homes their clients' employees are moving to.

Like more and more home buyers, they, know the work of this new breed of professional can save money and worries.

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