

Spring check-up

Roof problems need attention

Roof coverings fulfill three functions on most houses. First, they prevent moisture from penetrating into the top of the house.

Second, the overhang on the roof helps protect exterior walls from becoming excessively wet. Third, the roof should be aesthetically pleasing, blending with the architecture of the house.

There are common areas which should be checked with any roof covering and spring is a good time to do this.

To spot problems, examine the roof with a pair of binoculars. For your own safety and protection of the shingles, do not go up on the roof.

The weakest areas on any roof are at the joints of different materials.

Look closely where chimneys, vents, plumbing stacks, or television antennas connect to the roof.

Roof edges and roof/wall intersections should also receive particular attention. Valleys created where different roof angles come together are another problem area.

Although there are many types of roofing materials available for houses, the most common used is asphalt shingles. This shingle is made up of a paper or felt impregnated with asphalt and covered with small granules.

The mineral granules reflect the ultraviolet rays of the sun, preventing breakdown of the asphalt. Most modern shingles can last up to 25 years.

You can tell when asphalt is wearing out when missing granules appear as bare spots on shingles. Shingles which buckle in the middle or curl at the edges have very little life remaining and torn or missing shingles indicate that immediate repairs are necessary.

Exposure to the sun on the south and west sides of a roof cause it to age more rapidly. Also, the bottom shingles, which receive more water



run-off than do upper sections, tend to wear out first.

When roofing is necessary, it is important to determine how many layers of shingles are on the roof. New shingles can be laid over old shingles. Ideally, no more than two layers of roofing material should be used. Additional material results in an uneven surface and, more important, excessive weight on the roof framing members.

Slate roofs are another option to consider when roofing your house. They are high quality and can last 100 years or more with good maintenance, but do cost more than asphalt shingles.

Slate shingles are heavy, brittle and come in many colors. Good slates deteriorate only slightly because of freeze-thaw action, but are susceptible to mechanical damage.

The most common problem is rusting of the nails holding the

slates in place. As the nails rust, the slates slip out of position, allowing water to penetrate the roofing system.

Typically very steep, a slate roof should never be walked on. It's best to examine the roof with binoculars or from a flat adjacent roof. Slates are very slippery and, if the nails are badly rusted, they can easily be dislodged by the pressure of footsteps.

If you spot trouble on your roof or need some advice about your roof's condition, call in a professional roofer. He will conduct a thorough, on-the-roof inspection. An experienced roofer should be able to advise as to the advantages of different types of shingles, life expectancy of each, and comparable costs.

This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Consider written contract for paving projects

When having a driveway paved, get all details of the job carved in stone, then keep a close eye on the work, consumer advisers warn.

A written contract is considered vital for any renovation project. Paving jobs alone spark about 200 complaints to the Ontario government every year.

Unethical companies who undercut the competition — charging really low prices, but doing lousy work — were the worst culprits, say representatives of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR).

They advise that the consumer shop around, but don't pick a contractor based on a low price alone.

Consumers often have trouble with driveway paving jobs because they don't understand what they need, what they're buying or whether they were given what was promised.

Different types of work will be required, depending on the condition of the driveway. The job can vary from a simple resurfacing to complete excavation and replacement of the existing pavement.

The quantities of stone and other materials used is crucial, say the ministry experts and this is where a lot of disreputable companies rip people off.

By following five basic rules, consumers can avoid scams, misunderstandings and financial losses. The ministry has produced a detailed guide to driveway paving, providing in-depth information about such things as types of material commonly used, necessary depths, and the different kinds of work involved.

According to the guide, "a six-inch base of stone, topped with two inches of asphalt meets most needs." That "two inches" repre-

sents the depth once the asphalt has been compacted. Get three written estimates.

After becoming familiar with materials and terminology used in the paving industry, call at least two contractors for estimates. Be sure each quote is based on the same specifications.

Never hire a contractor without talking to at least one recent customer. Read the contract carefully.

It must include the name and address of both the paving company and the customer. Complete details about the job must be listed, including the type of work to be done and driveway dimensions. Depths and qualities of materials to be supplied should also be set out.

A start and completion date should be in the contract and deposits should be kept to a maximum of 10 per cent, experts advise.

According to the ministry, a properly-paved driveway should have a lifespan of at least 10 years.

Industry representatives who helped prepare the paving brochure say most defects show up during the first 12 months and the standard one-year warranty is, therefore, sufficient.

Companies are obliged to fulfill all the provisions of their warranties, so get details in writing. But remember, if the contractor goes out of business, so does the warranty.

Consumers who feel they have been unfairly treated by a paving contractor can contact the nearest Consumer Services Bureau of the ministry for help.

Copies of a brochure on paving are available from the Consumer Information Centre at 555 Yonge St., Toronto, Ontario M7A 2H6, (416) 963-1111.



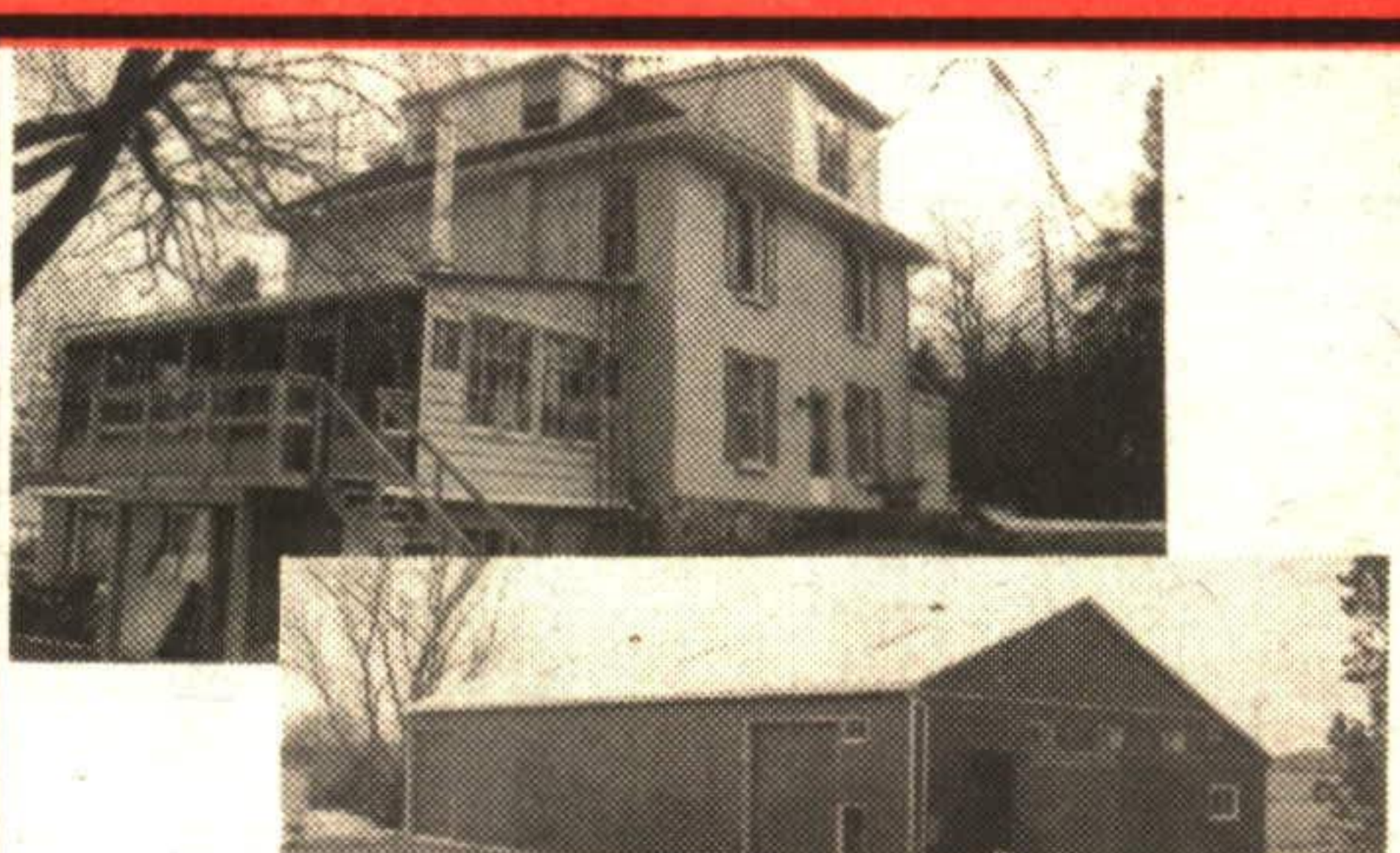
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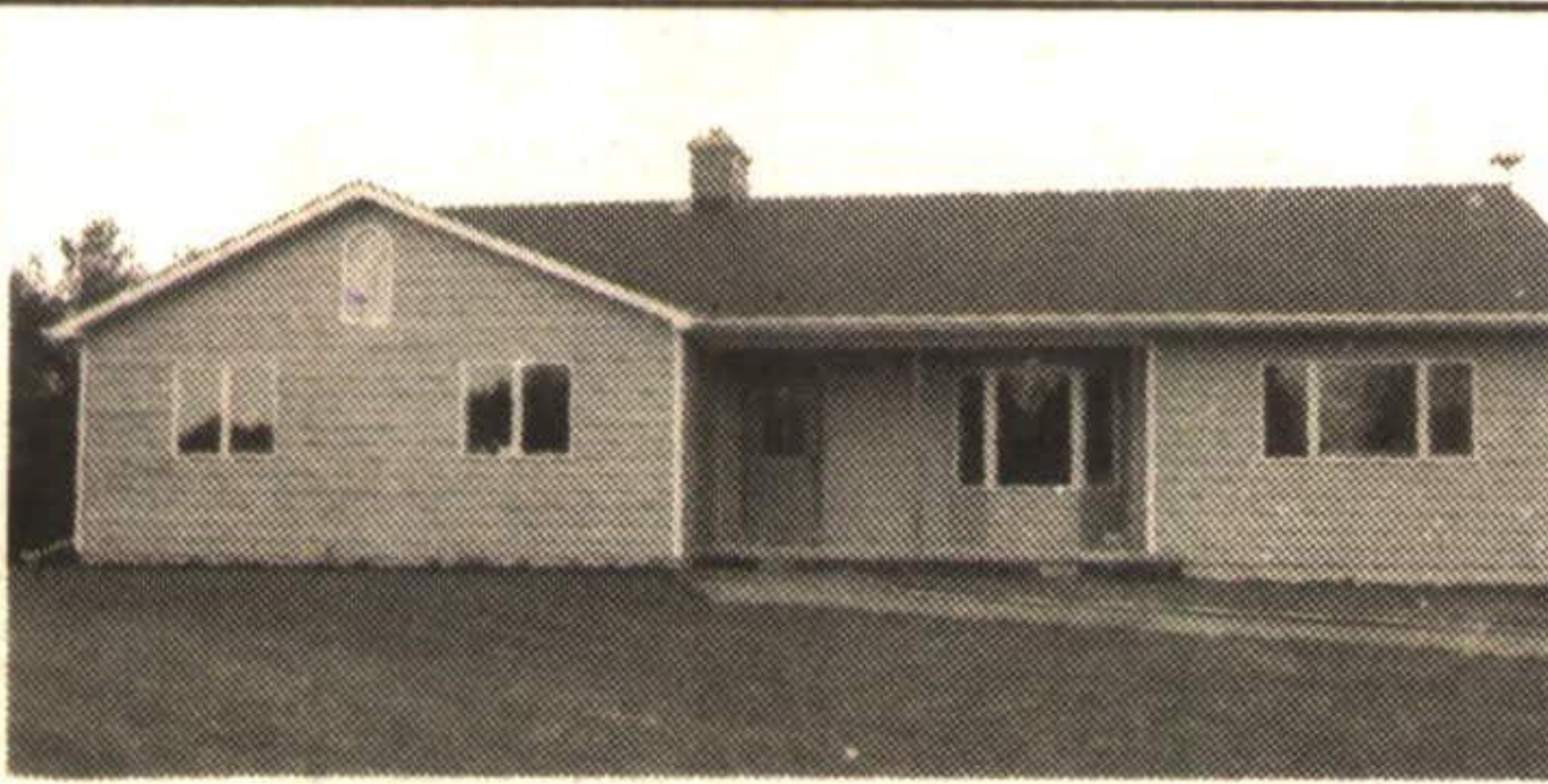
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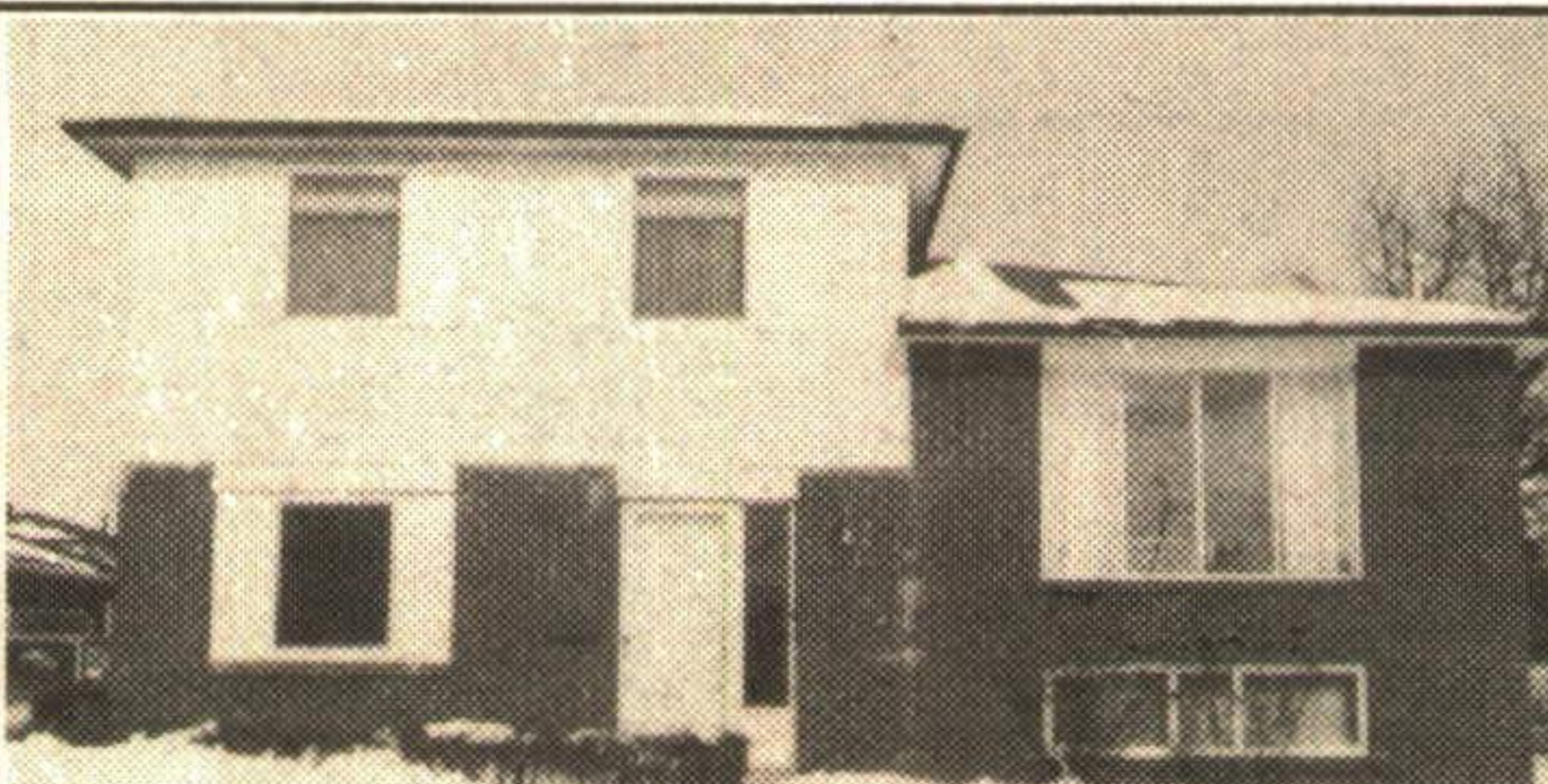
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