

He wants to keep making it right

New HGTV show will focus on home inspections

By Christina Commisso
METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

At age six Mike Holmes re-wired his family's home with some help from his dad and at 12 he renovated his uncle's basement. By the time he was 19, Holmes started his first contracting company with a crew of 13 employees and at 21, he founded his own renovation company.

Now, the 45-year-old host of HGTV's highest rated show, *Holmes on Homes*, has surpassed the realm of contracting — he is a brand.

With two best-selling books, a clothing and boot line, a community of eco-friendly homes and a charitable foundation under his tool belt, Holmes' Make it Right philosophy is celebrated worldwide. But if you ask him what he thinks of a career that has exploded since debuting on HGTV eight years ago, he stays true to his humble beginnings.

"I'm not a TV guy, I'm a contractor," said Holmes from a Burlington home being featured in his latest project — *Holmes Inspections*.

Holmes said the No. 1 complaint he hears from homeowners is about home inspections. So, as the seventh and final season of *Holmes on Homes* wraps up this spring, Canada's favourite contractor will be hitting the airwaves again in late 2009 with his new show.

"Why isn't there a better inspection, why weren't pictures taken, why isn't there a portfolio on this house to follow. That's what I'm trying to create — a new system in the home inspection industry," said Holmes as he pointed out the numerous blunders in the seemingly beautiful lakeshore home.

"When Rick and Didi bought this house two years ago, they loved it. This was the one to buy," he said.

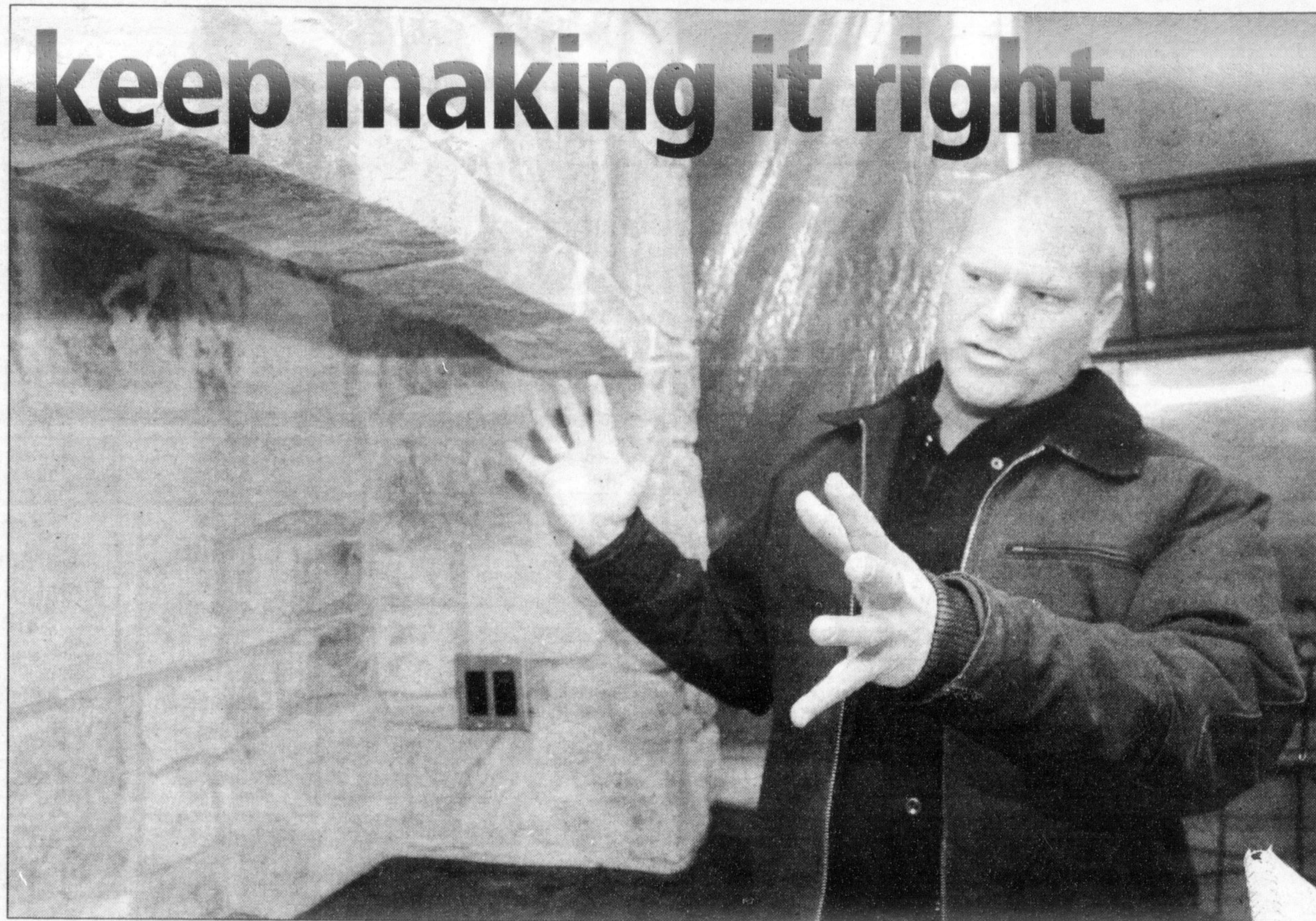
The couple purchased the newly-renovated home after an inspector gave it two thumbs up.

"It's two thumbs down," said Holmes. "Electrically speaking, I am quite confident this house should have burnt down already."

The previous tenants owned the house for four months, during which the home was flipped and sold to Rick and Didi, who asked that their last names not be published.

"The ceramic tiles were loose on the stairway, there was a stain on the ceiling from water damage on the second floor and the ventilation system over the stove didn't work," said Rick.

So the couple e-mailed *Holmes on Homes* for a list of ref-



LIESA KORTMANN / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

HOLMES INSPECTIONS: Mike Holmes, a familiar face as the host of HGTV's *Holmes on Homes*, was in Burlington recently to promote his new show, which will focus on home inspectors.

erences for contractors in the Burlington area. They were then asked about appearing on the show.

"There have been things Mike has found since that I didn't even know about," said Rick, who is very pleased with the Holmes experience. "They're a great group of guys, first-class, clean, polite and professional in every aspect."

There are no mandatory licensing or government regulations for home inspectors in Canada. Holmes said this leads to what he believes to be some inexperienced people performing home inspections. (See story below). That's why Holmes has high expectations for his new show.

"It's a little bit of CSI meeting Mike Holmes," he said, referring to the sophisticated technology used in production. "Viewers are really going to learn, through special effects, what's going on inside their homes."

Holmes said he receives about 100,000 emails a year from families looking for his seek-and-destroy touch. Depending on how much the family needs his help, or how much viewers can learn from the project, Holmes picks 13 homeowners to appear on the show. The overwhelming response to the series doesn't surprise Holmes. "It's the same crap, different home, it doesn't matter where we go."

But Holmes believes the 'Make It Right' philosophy is starting to make a difference. "There are little guys that want

to be the next Mike Holmes," said the Halton Hills resident.

"I think we're going to start to see better homes, better builders, better education. We'll get back that integrity we lost years ago."

Holmes said he believes changes in the industry ought to start at the school level, where students should be taught theories alongside practical training. "We are only teaching how, we need to be teaching why."

Holmes said he wants to start a school for the trades, but in the meantime he just might do some work in Kansas City building houses that would withstand tornadoes.

As Holmes continues to shine a spotlight on innocent homeowners sometimes blind-sided by the challenging world of home inspections, he aims at improving the construction industry, one episode at a time.

"It's supposed to be a good experience, dealing with a personal contractor," he said, explaining how contractors and homeowners need to work together. "It's like a whole dating process."

The Holmes Group is looking for Milton homeowners to appear in the new HGTV series, *Holmes Inspection*. If you have purchased a home within the last two years with the approval of a home inspector, and you are noticing problems, visit www.makeitright.ca to submit your story.

Home inspectors 'doing a good job,' says association

By Christina Commisso
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According to the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors, the message they have always received from the public and the government has been "you guys are doing a good job, continue doing it," said spokesperson Alrek Meipoom.

In 1994, the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors (OAH) became a self-regulating body, granting the association exclusive rights to define qualification requirements and grant the designation Registered Home Inspector. In recent years, the OAH has spoken to several government bodies, including business and consumer services, about licensing the profession.

"From a statistical point of view, we don't show up on the radar, meaning we don't get complaints," said Meipoom.

Home renovators, on the other hand, receive several com-

plaints from unhappy customers, he said.

Meipoom said he was curious to see the angle of Mike Holmes' new show *Holmes Inspections*, since the conditions home inspectors typically work in involve numerous restrictions.

When Holmes performs an inspection, it's classified as destructive testing, for example, making holes in the walls or floors, he said.

"You can't do that when you don't actually own the house," explained Meipoom.

Instead, home inspectors can only comment on what is visible. They look for clues and interpret the problem.

The OAH invited Holmes to speak at one of its annual conferences after he wrote an article in a large daily newspaper critiquing the home inspection industry.

"We wanted to educate him on what we do, who we are and what the process is to become a home inspector," said Meipoom. "He was quite surprised and pleased."

Meipoom said the OAH recommends that realtors refer

home inspectors who are part of the association, where members have considerable experience, education and training.

The OAH's website states: "No single source of information is sufficient to launch a competent practice in this field. It is a combination of all. Meaning, along with a solid understanding of the construction industry, home inspectors have to be versed in roofing, plumbing, heating, electrical and air conditioning systems."

Also, if a homeowner has a bad experience with a member inspector, he can file a complaint with the association and an investigation will follow.

A spokesperson for the Ontario Real Estate Association said realtors typically recommend several home inspectors to avoid a conflict of interest. "Home inspection is a profession that is growing," said Bob McLean, director of communications. "We encourage full disclosure of information on a house."