

Home Inspection

By Brian Madigan

What about having a home inspection done before you buy your next house? This makes sense, but most people don't do it. And, there's no good reason!



The preferred arrangement would be to negotiate an agreement that was conditional for a few days upon the home inspection. Typically, it will say "satisfactory to the purchaser", but that point is negotiable.

Home Inspectors do not fall within a regulated industry, so there are no formal qualifications for the job. Literally, anyone who describes himself as a home inspector, and has his name printed on some business cards can suddenly be in the business.

A good home inspector will work for an established company, have good references, a proven track record and some relevant qualifications. This would be a great job for a retired engineer.

So, what do they look at? They should look at just about everything. The condition of the structure, any settling, leakage or seepage problems, the functioning of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems should all be subject to scrutiny. They will also look at the furnace and air conditioning systems. In addition, they should check for wood rot, termites and insect infestation.

You should receive a comprehensive report noting immediate repairs as well as longer term replacements and maintenance. They should report upon compliance with building codes, but not all of them do.

Generally, they will not check swimming pools, hot tubs, appliances or the condition of outside landscaping, driveways, fences, decks and sheds.

The purpose of the report is to let the purchaser know exactly what he is buying. The purchaser should be fully informed.

But, some home inspectors fall short of this task. All too often, they miss important issues such as the presence (or former presence) of urea formaldehyde foam insulation or the fact that the property is a recently renovated former grow house operation.

In all fairness, the home inspector is often restricted in terms of the type of inspections that can be performed. Tests cannot be conducted, nor can carpeting be pulled back to reveal hidden defects. These restrictions are usually outlined in the fine print.

The better companies provide a comprehensive report, a schedule for maintenance and repairs together with an estimate of the appropriate costs.

When should you have a home inspector? The best time would be right after your conditional offer has been accepted. If there is anything unsatisfactory contained in the report, then you can withdraw from the transaction, otherwise it may be too late.

In a multiple offer situation you might not be able to include this clause, if you expect your offer to be accepted. So, here you might want to incur the costs beforehand. At least, there will be no surprises.

On occasion, after your unconditional offer has been accepted, you still might wish to have a home inspector attend at the premises and provide you with a report, if you suspect hidden defects.

Sellers are obligated to disclose latent defects, and if there was no disclosure then you have certain remedies. Here, you will have to point this out to your solicitor prior to closing.

In one recent case, a realtor who failed to recommend a home inspection condition was found liable to the purchaser when the building was condemned by the municipality.

The cost is modest, \$ 300.00 to \$ 500.00 in most cases. It is better to be safe than sorry!

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