

# PROFESSIONALS ADVISE REHAB INSPECTIONS

Rehab fever is still running high in North America. In both metropolitan and rural areas, the urge to renovate has proven to be catching and exhilarating.

Yet for fully 50% of the people who have recently contracted for home improvement work, the process has been costly and frustrating. Disputes with builders over such things as the materials used, the quality of workmanship, missed deadlines, and the addition of unanticipated expenses have left many home owners financially overextended and generally soured on the experience.

The Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors (CAHPI), a professional association of independent home inspectors, reports that the biggest problem in this area is the "fast-start" syndrome. Contractors obtain a large initial deposit and early payments from the client, work hard to begin the project, and then slack off before the work is completed (usually because other projects come along). Many people even have difficulty getting builders back to finish the job.

Another problem home owners face is not getting what they had bargained for. According to CAHPI members who regularly inspect remodelling work, the size of the heating equipment and the ductwork are often found to be inadequate for the job. Items such as insulation and electrical service may fall short of the promised specifications, say the inspectors, and roofing and flashing may show poor workmanship or fail to be weathertight.

The CAHPI recommends that, in order to avoid problems associated with rehab work, that homeowners should consult a professional home inspector before, during, and after the job. Having an inspector there is the equivalent of getting a second medical opinion. When a change of construction plans or materials is called for, the inspection will help to determine whether the extra costs and work are necessary and correct.

Even an experienced home owner, knowledgeable in home construction, can benefit from the impartial expertise of a home inspector, particularly if a dispute with the contractor goes to litigation. Many inspectors serve as expert witnesses for their clients, either in pre-trial settlement negotiations or in the court room.

Furthermore, if a contractor knows that his work is being inspected by an objective professional hired by the client, he is less likely to try to take advantage.

A typical inspection schedule involves three to four on-site visits:

- (1) Prior to Contract - to examine the house and review and discuss the contractor's plans and specifications;
- (2) At the Half-way Point - when the framing on a new structure is all up and the mechanical systems (e.g. electrical, plumbing, heating/AC, have been installed, to review the work in progress;
- (3) Upon Completion - after the finishing work has been completed and before the final payment is made, to conduct a final and total examination of the work performed and of the house as a whole;
- (4) Optional Review - at any time during the remodelling to determine if any material substitutions which might have been made are satisfactory and/or if any cost overruns were justified.

The average fee for a rehab inspection schedule is approximately one to two percent of the typical rehab cost. This is money well spent, as it provides the consumer with assurance that there will be a knowledgeable third party watching out exclusively for their interests.

One final word of caution. Consumers must be as careful and particular in selecting their home inspector as they are in hiring a remodelling contractor. The Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors have established Standards of Practice and a Code of Ethics which provide the benchmark of professional performance recognized by both industry and government groups, as well as the general public. To become members of CAHPI, inspectors must meet the Association's rigorous technical and professional experience qualifications.

For further information on Home Inspections, or to obtain the names of qualified home inspectors in your area, visit: [www.cahpi.ca](http://www.cahpi.ca) - and link to the website applicable to your province.