

PRE-SALE INSPECTION GIVES HOME SELLERS COMPETITIVE EDGE!

Most real estate agents will agree that a house in good physical condition is more likely to sell, and command a higher price, than one that needs a great deal of repair. Yet according to home inspection experts, approximately half of the resale homes on the market today have at least one significant defect, and just about all homes need some maintenance and repair work.

“Correcting these problems early not only makes the property more attractive and desirable, it also simplifies the negotiation process when the time comes for the buyer’s pre-purchase home inspection,” say inspectors from the leading organization of professional home inspectors, the Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors (CAHPI). “A favourable home inspection report confirms the buyer’s good feelings about the home, and helps to expedite the sale.”

To identify the building components that are most in need of repair, many sellers commission inspections before putting up the “For Sale” sign. The person best qualified to do this is an experienced professional home inspector.

According to the inspectors of CAHPI, a home buyer’s primary concern is the condition of the home’s basic structure and major electrical and mechanical systems. Most buyers, particularly when there’s a large selection of homes to choose from, consider only those homes which don’t require a great deal of time and money to repair.

The best items to repair, then, are those which typically appear on home inspection reports. In a past survey of its members, CAHPI found that the Number One problem was improper grading and drainage around the house, a leading cause of foundation water penetration. The second most frequently found problem area was the electrical system, including situations such as insufficient electrical service to the house, inadequate overload protection, and amateur, often dangerous, wiring connections. Though these problems are not especially costly to fix, they do significantly affect a buyer’s impression of a home.

Roof damage, and mechanical problems with the heating and air conditioning systems, were the third and fourth most frequently reported problems. Repairing worn or improper roof flashing as well as faulty HVAC controls, according to CAHPI, are examples of maintenance investments that will pay off when the time comes for the buyer’s own evaluation.

A pre-sale home inspection will also alert home sellers to a variety of other maintenance improvements that will enhance a home’s appearance and marketability, such as:

- trimming trees and shrubs which touch or overhang the house;
- new caulking and weatherstripping around windows and doors;
- cleaning gutters of debris and leaves; repairing or replacing cracked or broken gutters, downspouts, and extensions to ensure proper drainage.
- replacing bathroom caulk or grouting where necessary to prevent seepage and improve appearance.

Fixing even minor items can go a long way toward improving that important first impression of a home, so home sellers should remember to repair leaky faucets, tighten loose doorknobs, replace damaged screens, and replace broken panes of glass.

Pre-sale home inspections can also point out important safety precautions which buyers will appreciate, such as:

- installing Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI's) in "wet" areas, such as kitchen counter tops, bath rooms, and exterior outlets;
- keeping flammable products away from heaters, water heaters, and fireplaces.

When selecting a home inspector for this pre-sale evaluation, it is important to look for someone with the right professional qualifications, objectivity, and experience; someone who has demonstrated competence in this field, and will not use the inspection, for example, to solicit repair work. An inspector's membership in a professional home inspectors' association should therefore be a primary consideration.

For further information on home inspections, or to obtain the names of qualified home inspectors in your area, visit: www.cahpi.ca - and link to the website applicable to your province.