

NEW HOMES NEED INSPECTIONS TOO, ACCORDING TO LEADING PROFESSIONALS

For Janet and Bill Martin, the problems began only a few months after they moved into their newly-built home. The spring rains, heavier than usual that year, caused terrible basement flooding as well as roof leaks that dripped through the attic floor to the second storey below. When Mrs. Martin went to plug in her trash compactor for the first time, she discovered that the electrical outlet did not work. And with the first heavy heat of the summer, they found that the central air conditioning system had never been set up.

Like many home owners in similar situations, the Martins say they knew about professional pre-purchase home inspections, but didn't think they needed one. After all, they thought, what could be wrong with a brand new house?

According to the Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors (CAHPI), however, construction flaws are often just as prevalent in new housing as in older homes, if not more so. Due to a combination of rising material and labour costs, contract deadlines, the use of inferior materials and construction shortcuts, and overall sloppy workmanship, newer buildings are not necessarily the maintenance-free bargains they may at first appear to be.

Based on a survey of its members, CAHPI reports that a number of problems consistently seem to crop up in new home construction:

- (1) Water seepage into the basement or cellar/crawl space, which is most frequently caused by the adjacent soil being insufficiently graded away from the house;
- (2) Settling cracks in the foundation, often a problem when homes are built on new landfill or a hill;
- (3) Inadequate attic ventilation, which can lead to moisture condensation, wood rot, and uncomfortably warm temperatures;
- (4) Improperly installed attic insulation, often with the vapour barrier facing the wrong way, or insulation covering the air vents;
- (5) Poor roof construction, such as insufficient pitch for water runoff, flashing incorrectly installed or not installed, and improper grades of materials used;
- (6) Badly fitted ducts in the heating and air-conditioning systems; and
- (7) Sloppy masonry and finish work.

Since there is no such thing as a "perfect home", the CAHPI advises all buyers to have their prospective purchase, whether old or new, inspected by an experienced and impartial professional home inspector before signing on the dotted line. Home inspectors who are members of the CAHPI have demonstrated their technical and professional competence. The CAHPI Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics provide the model of performance and professional conduct for the home inspection profession which is recognized in Canada.

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.