

What happens right after an inspection is completed? Ask why was the inspection was prepared in the first place? Will the selling price be re-negotiated? Will the homeowner be asked to make repairs? Or was it booked to simply find information about the property? The main thing is to do something! Talk to an agent about the next step. This newsletter discusses some of the concerns that are often noted on a typical inspection report and explains some of the wording used.

GROW-OPS

Almost **every realtor** or **home inspector** has run across a grow-op. Some “grows” are very simple, often found under stairwells, in a corner of a basement or in a garage. Others are full blown operations, utilizing the entire basement, the garage and sometimes the whole home. Virtually every grow-op busted by police is found in a rental property. Really, who wants to damage their own home? Some sellers will **try to hide** every trace of a grow-op. When a new purchaser moves in, there can be serious concerns regarding their family’s health and safety. **Purchasers may be extremely upset that they were not informed.** Due to a plethora of bad publicity on this topic lately, the following wording is suggested by CAHPI and has already been included in my inspection report.

“During this inspection, the following items were found: *

- Carpets or flooring is damaged or entirely removed
- Holes - circular or unexplained holes in walls, ceilings, floors, cupboards or closets
- Modifications to electrical panels
- New or modified electrical service conduits and meters
- Staples or masking tape on ceilings, windows or doors
- Moisture stains or mould in attics, ceilings and walls
- Excessive number of power outlets or extension cords
- Hooks or holes in ceilings for hanging lights or plants
- Circular stains on floors, counters, cabinets, etc.
- Debris - plant pots, dirt and bamboo supports

- Tubular plastic or metal ducts in attic or crawlspaces
- Support wires or other activity in attics or crawlspaces
- Modifications to heating ducts, fireplaces or walls
- Smells and odours

* This is not intended to be an inclusive list

It is impossible to verify why, how, or when these items came into existence; but they have been known to be associated with marijuana grow operations. You should seek further advice from your realtor, the vendors, municipal and/or police records, or qualified contractors, to determine if these items were associated with a marijuana grow operation or not.”

There is always uncertainty as to the actual presence or proof of a grow-op (verses an in-house plant or gardening enthusiast). Inspectors must be very sure of their findings before they can definitely declare that a grow-op was present at some time in the home.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM AN INSPECTION?

Most of the comments and details found in an inspection report will discuss or include:

- **Maintenance recommendations**
- **Life expectancies, and**
- **Minor imperfections**

The issues that **really matter** will fall into four categories:

- **Major defects** This includes structural failure, damaged roofing, major foundation cracking
- **Things that lead to major defects** Small roof and flashing leaks, poor caulking at windows, damaged siding, wood touching soil
- **Things that may hinder your ability to finance, legally occupy or insure the home** This includes galvanized piping, knob & tube wiring, 60 amp electrical service, asbestos
- **Safety hazards and health concerns** such as a damaged wiring in the electric panel, mould-like material, missing guardrails

Most sellers are honest and are often surprised to learn of defects found at an inspection. However, they are under no obligation to repair anything mentioned in the report or to reduce their asking price. **A professional realtor** is in the best position to address concerns found in a report - it is inappropriate and beyond the “code of ethics” for home inspectors to recommend further action or give quotes for repairs. Always use qualified professionals when estimating costs or making repairs.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HOME INSPECTOR

WHY WAS SO MUCH TIME WASTED?

I recently inspected a property that was about as old as me. Obviously, over the years, there have been many upgrades, but most remained in its original condition... just older!

This particular home was **NOT PURCHASED** by my clients. Very disappointing because I know that this couple searched for a long time before they found this one. Prior to making their decision on this property, they visited many homes; travelled countless miles; and spent hours discussing the pros and cons of each.

After several visits by both the realtor and the purchaser, they finally choose this home. Their realtor started the paperwork immediately, called the listing agent who arranged for key access and sought permission from the owner so an inspection could be booked. The purchaser confirmed the inspection with me and then arranged for some time off work so he could attend. The homeowner had to make arrangements to go somewhere during the inspection.

On the day of the inspection, the listing agent, selling agent, purchaser and the inspector, all converged on the property.

After the inspection, the purchaser chose **not to purchase**. Phone calls were made to the selling agent, then the listing agent and finally, the bad news was passed to the homeowner explaining that the property was not purchased.

So what could have prevented this from happening?

A few simple tasks could have changed the outcome entirely. **First Task**; the homeowner should have made sure the home was in reasonable shape and had proof of good workmanship. **Second Task**, the listing agent could have insisted that the homeowner followed through on the first task.

Unfortunately, the home inspection was the last spike in the coffin... not because of the home inspection, but because the home was in poor shape and it spoke for itself.

It is quite probable that the homeowner didn't know that there were any major concerns. The homeowner could have called me for a pre-listing inspection which would have identified many of the concerns found at the inspection. Permits, ensuring that most of the upgrades were approved and properly added could have been available.

So what were the serious issues at this home that killed the deal? First, the **main power** to this home was **60 amps**, not really enough for today's power demand. The seller was probably aware of this. Although not illegal, it is certainly a concern by many insuring professionals. Interestingly, the both

electrical panel and circuit wiring in the home were already updated and the original knob & tube wiring was removed. Water service was located and visible on the basement ceiling, and although it was updated with copper piping, there was a small amount of **galvanized piping** which will have to be replaced.

The **water heater** was quiet old and should have been replaced long ago as it was over 20 years old; however, it was still working and did not show any signs of deterioration or rust. Clients should definitely budget to replace this unit.

An older **above-ground oil tank** and **oil furnace** were found in the basement - even though these were replaced with a new natural gas furnace. The insurer will probably ask for confirmation that the tank is "empty" and the old furnace has been permanently decommissioned. Also, the tank may have to be cut into pieces and removed from the basement.

The most serious aspect of this home involved an **addition to the living room**. This addition was built outside the footprint of the original concrete foundation. The contractor simply placed concrete blocks on the soil and rested the structure on the blocks, creating a dirt-floor crawlspace. It was very obvious that the addition was sinking. It would have been better if the footings were more than just concrete blocks and were located **below the frost-line**. An attempt was made to shore up the sloping floor with wood supports, but these too were improperly resting on the soil. Under the addition, it was noted that there was no **ventilation**, no **insulation** or **heat source** in the area, no **vapour barrier**, **wood-to-soil contact**, and the exterior walls were nothing more than vinyl siding, not even nailed to the supporting members. No wonder the floor was cold and was sloping downhill. An opening to this addition from the living room was created by knocking down the original exterior wall. Although there was a **supporting beam** visible over the opening, it had a measured sag of over 2.5 cm. and although not certain, this could fail over time. A permit would have reduced the chance of poor design in this area.

It's a shame that so many people were inconvenienced and wasted so much time as a result of the poor showing at an inspection. Not really a poor home inspection, but a poorly maintained and out-of-date home. Next time, I hope that the seller or the agent suggests a pre-purchase inspection. Could save a lot of frustration for a lot of people.

HOME INSPECTION FEES

When asked for a "quote" to do a home inspection, I usually respond by asking if they are looking for a "good price" or a "good inspection". Although it is not always true, you'll likely find that most experienced and reputable inspectors are at the high end of the rate scale, and the less experienced beginners charge the least. **BUT...cost alone should NEVER be the deciding factor when choosing an inspector!** The choice is yours... so make it a good one!

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