

**T**he current economy is taking a beating in BC's interior right now, and no-one can afford to have a sale collapse or delayed. Clients get upset if they look at properties and discover unexpected and undisclosed problems. This wastes everyone's valuable time, and can show a lack of care and professionalism.

The following tips have been listed in an effort to make the inspection process more thorough and complete. Included with recommendations such as de-cluttering, turning on lights and baking cookies - finding, repairing or replacing damaged features should be a priority for every showing.

## How to Prepare for a Home Inspection

As a real estate professional or listing homeowner, it's important to be aware of any issues the home has **prior** to putting it on the market. Listing without knowing it's detailed condition, could leave you open to surprises and delays, or even potential deal-breakers. Days before removing subjects, it is likely that the purchaser's home inspection will find things that could have been found, repaired or replaced, prior to listing. These should have been addressed earlier. Besides, it's easier and more economical to take care of problems prior to listing - when you can get better prices from a larger number of available professionals - negotiate the costs and get the best deals on repairs.

Before the inspector arrives, however: there are a few things you should know. Even though BC has regulations regarding the qualifications of inspectors, there is always the question of experience. Most inspectors hitting the streets in the last few years have simply completed a minimum number of inspections, and unless they display "**RHI**" behind their name, you can be certain that they **have not** completed the required number of inspections required to become professionally registered. Doctors and other professionals, proudly display "MD", PEng or "PhD" behind their names, just as every, registered and licensed home inspector displays the "RHI" Unfortunately, many inspectors have creative ways to entertain you about their experience or credentials.

Once your inspector arrives, ask if you can accompany him during the entire inspection (not the roof, however; -

he should take pictures for you to look at). By following him, you will become familiar with the entire home and all its systems - and develop your own list of exactly what repairs are recommended - and why. Before the inspection, you may have already prepared a list of concerns that you've seen in the home. The inspection is a great time to ask questions and to find out where the home's water, gas, irrigation and other shutoffs are - and where the main electrical breaker panel is.

## Other key suggestions include:

- **Accessibility:** Make sure all areas of the home are accessible, especially near the attic opening, furnace and electrical panels. It's also a good idea to trim any trees and shrubs around the exterior of the property.
- **Exterior:** Walk around the exterior of the residence. Look at the fascia, decks, handrails or stairs - check to insure there is no wood-rot present. Look at mitered corners and areas where wood pieces come into contact with each other or the earth. Replace, repair or paint any damaged wood members. Rot is considered a wood destroying organism and could hold up financing.
- **Plumbing:** Check the plumbing. Fill all sinks about ½ full with water and then drain them. Look at the underside to see if there are any leaks by gently wiggling and pulling on the pipes. Jiggle and flush all toilets and look for leaks around the base of the toilet base and at the water supply connection. Clean all the drains and repair loose handles. Caulk tubs.
- **Electrical:** Never do anything with the main electrical panel... it is too dangerous for homeowners. Instead, make sure cover plates or fixtures are installed on wall and ceiling outlets, wiring is not loose or exposed, extension cords are removed, fixtures are securely fastened to ceilings or walls and exposed wire ends are protected with wire nuts. Your inspector will check inside the main panel and around the home for grounding and polarity, proper wire sizing, proper support, loose connections, GFCI operation and location, etc. A qualified professional will be needed to repair anything that the inspector finds. **NOTE:** Never let anyone do any work on your electrical wiring unless he is professionally qualified and has a permit.
- Make sure all light fixtures work, inside and outside. Replace burned bulbs and clean ceiling fans.

- **Pool and Hot-tub:** If these are present, make sure there are no leaks in the pool house or tub enclosure, and insure the filter and pump are operating. Check the heater, if one is present.
- **Windows and Doors:** Operate, clean or paint all windows, especially if they have not been used in a long time. Consider adding a small amount of lubricant to allow for easier operation. Look for broken window seals or condensation between the panes.
- Insure all doors open, close and secure properly. Check and lube locks. Replace or repair weatherstripping.
- **Ceilings:** When walking around the interior of the residence, look up! This is an area where roof leaks can be seen. Look for stains under bathrooms, near chimneys and around skylights.
- **Air Conditioning:** Make sure all AC vents are clean and that the AC is providing cold air to the interior of the residence. A quick, informal check is to turn the AC on and wait 15 minutes. Check the temperature coming out of the vents and compare it to the original temperature in the home. The differential should be between 15 to 22° F.
- **Heating:** Clean around the furnace and make it easily accessible. Remove and install a new filter. Make sure all room and ceiling vents have a register cover.
- **Appliances:** Although appliances are usually not part of a professional home inspection, make sure all appliances operate as intended.
- **Disclosure Statement:** If there is or was a problem with the home, mark it on the disclosure statement. For example: - You fail to disclose an old roof leak that has been professionally repaired... I do the inspection in a dry month, and see that the attic has some staining and the ceiling in a bedroom is discoloured. The buyer and myself will assume that it could be active, even though it tests dry with a moisture meter or IR camera. If this repair was mentioned in the disclosure statement, then it would not be in question.

- **NOTE:** If you purposely try to hide, cover or otherwise prevent a defect or other failure from being discovered - it is an admission that **you previously knew** about the defect. If you are aware of such a defect, **and** it is **NOT LISTED** on the **Disclosure Statement**, then you may be held liable for any subsequent damage. Hidden-defects could include: water entry in a basement, roof leaks, wood rot, pest damage, previous house fires, a grow-op, amateur electrical work, improper fireplace installation, asbestos, mould, miscellaneous water damage from household leaks and damaged seasonal non-inspected features such as AC units, furnaces and irrigation systems. The list goes on, so don't cheat!
- **Defects: NEVER** try to hide defects - **REPAIR** them instead and save all your receipts. When I find a hidden defect (painted-over wood rot, for example), my antennae go up and it makes me look that much harder at everything else. Inspectors hate being tricked. Bring all repair receipts to the inspection so we can see them. Many items might even have a warranty.
- **Let us do our job:** During the inspection, try not to argue with the inspector. His job is to find things. Let him write his report and then let the realtor do his job. Tell your realtor about your concerns and then let the Real Estate Professionals do the job you are paying them to do. Arguing with the Home Inspector does not do any good - if we see it, we must and will report it - we pride ourselves on finding defects.
- **Permits:** Most homes require a city or municipal permit anytime structural, electrical or plumbing is modified significantly or added to. This includes most new electrical outlets and wiring, gas fireplaces, deck additions, new bathrooms, etc. Have permits available for the realtor, inspector or purchaser.
- **Use common sense:** There are some items like the electrical panels, steep roofs, gutters, furnaces, etc... that the homeowner or realtor **cannot and should not** attempt to check. If all the other items are repaired properly, then everything else will go much smoother.

This is not a complete list of preparations one can take, as it would take pages to identify them all. As a seller (or his representative), having an economical home inspection will help ensure that you're aware of any problems in the home so you can take care of them on your terms – or present them as-is and adjust your selling price. Limit the surprises. If in doubt about your skills, and you really don't want to be caught at the last minute with repairs or a possible collapse of the deal, then call your experienced, friendly, neighbourhood Home Inspector for a listing inspection. Cost: About 1/10 of 1% of the listing price.

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