

Hi There,

Thanks for your interest in information on hiring a home inspector. The fact that you are reading this message proves that you are a wise consumer who is interested in learning more about hiring a home inspection company. Possibly because you are considering making what will be, for most of us, the largest purchase of our lives.

Purchasing a home is rarely an easy task. More often it is a complicated and stressful process. In spite of that, a recent CMHC survey of home buyers discovered that many people spend less than half an hour in a home before deciding whether or not to purchase it. *Does this make sense to you?*

If you're in the process of buying a home, chances are you might be losing sleep these days, wondering how to know whether the home you are considering is the right one for you and if there may be problems with the home that have not been detected. Hiring a home inspector to inspect the building on your behalf and provide you with a written report of his findings is an obvious choice for most people.

The home inspection industry has had some bad press lately over alleged incidents of negligence, poor inspections and serious mistakes being made by inspectors. Not surprisingly, many consumers are wondering how widespread these type of incidents are and how to avoid becoming involved in one of them themselves. To this end, I have listed a few pieces of advice below that may help you in choosing the right home inspection company.

**BE INFORMED!!**

The decisions involved in making any large investment are always much easier when you are well informed and know as much as you can about whatever it is you are spending your hard earned money on. Having your prospective home inspected by trained building expert is an excellent way to get a ton of invaluable, in depth, information and to avoid every home buyers nightmare - **the money pit!** The difficulty is in knowing which inspection company to hire and how to be sure the inspector you hired can be trusted to provide information that is accurate and can be trusted.

**DO YOUR HOMEWORK**

As I said, there have been a number of stories in the news lately, featuring unhappy home buyers who have bought what they thought was a solid home after hiring a home inspection company to inspect the property on their behalf. These unfortunate people have then discovered a homeowner's worst nightmare - major structural damage and mold problems - shortly after moving into their new homes. They are now coming to terms with the question of how they will come up with the many thousands of dollars, that they don't have, needed to cover the cost of repairs, as well as finding a place for their families to live while their home is being torn apart. All this was *after* the home had been given a clean bill of health by their home inspector!

The truth is that home inspectors are people and, like all other people, they make mistakes from time to time. This is not so much a reflection of the Home Inspection industry as it is a reflection of the world we live in. It is not unusual to hear the same sorts of stories being told about professional people in other lines of work, such as dentists and lawyers. However, there is no denying that some of the mistakes we all have heard about have resulted in large and expensive headaches for the homebuyers involved.

SOOO...THE QUESTION IS...

"How often do these sorts of problems happen in home inspections?" Or maybe, "How can I know that the person I hired to provide me with important information about the *biggest purchase of my life(!)* can be trusted to be thorough and competent at his work?" But what you really want to know is, "how can I be sure that I am not going to end up having an experience like those people I keep hearing about in the news?"

The good news is you can relax, the incidents that are making news headlines, although good for selling papers, make up only a tiny percentage of the total number of home inspections being done. The vast majority home inspectors are dedicated and capable professionals and, with a little work on your part, you can be sure that your home inspection will be done to the highest standards possible.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PAYING FOR? .

Since Last April (09), all home inspectors in BC have to be licensed by the Province and all home inspections done by them must to comply with a specific Standards of Practice (SOP). The SOP lays out a minimum standard for what should be inspected in a home and what should be included in the inspection report. As a consumer who is about to invest a very large amount of money, you should take the time to go to my website at [www.clarioninspections.ca](http://www.clarioninspections.ca), and read the SOP that are posted there. That way, you will have

a clear understanding of the service you are paying for and what may not be included in your inspection; you may be surprised by what you learn. For instance, did you know that kitchen appliances and hot tubs are not included in the Standards of Practice?

Remember, the SOP lays out a minimum standard for home inspections. Many, but not all, home inspectors include things like appliances in their inspections as a courtesy to their clients. Some inspectors include digital photos of the inspection in their reports, some don't. Don't be afraid to ask a home inspector you're considering hiring what's not included in their inspections. Personally, I take the time to inspect everything I can in a home, regardless of whether or not it's in the SOP, as a way of satisfying my customers and getting more business.

You will also be asked to sign a Property Inspection Contract by your home inspector. This is a legally binding document that has been approved for use by the regulating bodies of the Home Inspection industry. It defines the conditions, obligations and terms of the Home Inspection process. You should be sure to read it and have your home inspector explain any sections you may not be clear of before you sign it.

## BE REALISTIC IN YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Both of the home inspector you hire and of the home you are purchasing. Don't forget that you are hiring someone to do a visual inspection only - they will not take things apart to inspect them or damage walls etc. to look inside them. Defects that are concealed from view may not be noticed by your inspector (unless they own an infrared camera!). Not all items in every system in the home will be sampled during a home inspection. For example, the Standards of Practice state that only one electrical outlet in each room must be sampled during a home inspection - even the most experienced inspector may not pick up all of the small defects in a home. It is important to remember that the main reason for hiring a home inspector is not to make a "maintenance list" of the minor issues in a home, but to confirm that there are no major problems or safety concerns that have gone undetected.

Also, don't be overwhelmed by you're the details you will receive in your inspection report. All homes have at least some deficiencies and yours will be no exception, no matter how new it is. Maintenance and home repair are a part of home ownership. What's important is to ensure that you are getting good value for your money and that there are no big surprises once you move in.

## IT PAYS TO BE THERE

You will get far more bang from your home inspection buck if you can tag along with your inspector while he/she is inspecting the home. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but no picture can come close to actually seeing with your own eyes.

Many inspectors prefer to have their clients meet him at the end of the inspection for a summary, after they have let the house tell them its story. A summary at the end of the inspection is often a good option for homebuyers who aren't able to be at the site for the 3 or 4 hour inspection process.

## THE SKINNY ON INFRARED CAMERAS

Infrared camera are sensitive diagnostic tools that have been around for years but, until quite recently, were too heavy and bulky (not to mention expensive) to be of much use on a home inspection. Infrared cameras or, more accurately, thermal imagers work by sensing the surface temperatures of any object they are pointed at and converting those temperatures into a visual image. Thus, using a thermal imager will allow the home inspector to "see" a home from the perspective of differences in the surface temperature of components of a house, such as walls, ceilings, and basements - something that it is not possible to do with the naked eye. And, when you think about it, knowing about differences in the temperature of something like a wall can tell you a great deal about things that are hidden from your eyes.

Plumbing leaks inside walls, roof leaks into attics, missing insulation, mold & mildew, condensation and rot are examples of the dozens of possible problems in a home that can be difficult or impossible to detect with a naked eye but will have an effect on surface temperatures and can be "seen" with an infrared camera.

While they are not the "magic bullet" of home inspecting, infrared cameras are excellent tools that can add detail and accuracy to a home inspection. The sad news is that, because these tools are still quite expensive - from \$7000 and up, most Home Inspection companies are still not using thermal imaging technology. Too bad, especially since almost all homebuyers prefer to have their home inspector to use an infrared camera and most inspectors can't imagine ever *not* having one in their tool kit, after using them a few times.

## WILL YOUR INSPECTOR STAND BEHIND HIS WORK?

There are many ways to find information about home inspection companies in your area, but one of the best is by asking your real estate agent for help - they are the one person you know who deals with home inspectors on a daily basis. While concerns over conflict of interest will not allow them to recommend any one individual, your real estate office is a hub for information on the housing industry and your agent should be able to inform you about some of the best inspections firms he or she has worked with in the past. They should also be able to give you a "heads up" about any inspectors in the area who, for whatever reason, have had disputes with other clients of his office. Once again, don't be afraid to ask questions like, "Do you have any unresolved disputes with any of your customers right now?", or, "How will you handle the situation in the event that you miss something during your inspection?", when you first speak to someone about a home inspection.

Since April, 2009, Provincial law has required all home inspectors in BC to be licensed. By ensuring your home inspector is licensed you will confirm that the person you hire is a member of a professional organization and has the required training and insurance.

After that, don't be afraid to ask other questions of the person you are contemplating hiring to help you determine if the services they offer are right for you. It is worth knowing that the minimum training required to become a Certified Home Inspector is not particularly long (less than 1 year, typically) or rigorous. It has been suggested that there should be a longer training period required for new home inspectors that should include on site experience and mentoring

However, many people working as home inspectors have moved into the profession after extensive careers in the engineering or residential building industries. These people have had many years of training and experience *before* becoming home inspectors and are building experts in every sense of the word. It is never a bad idea to ask what your inspector what they did *before* becoming a home inspector. Also, ask for former client references that you can speak to, as a way of finding out how other customers felt about the professional you are considering