

ASK THE INSPECTOR COLUMN FOR FEBRUARY 3, 2015

HEADLINE: MINISTER ORAZETTI FAILING TO PROTECT ONTARIO HOMEBUYERS

Back on January 7<sup>th</sup>, a letter I sent to Minister David Orazetti about the state of licensing of home inspectors in Ontario was printed in this column. I had requested a reply within a couple of weeks and the following text, under the official letterhead, was received a week ago.

Dear Mr. Allen,

I received your letter, and am also aware of your previous inquiries regarding home inspectors. Thank You for the opportunity to respond directly to you.

Our government remains committed to moving forward with the development of a legislative framework to regulate home inspectors in Ontario. My “mandate letter” includes a commitment to strengthen consumer marketplace fairness and transparency by bringing forward home inspector qualifications.

In June of 2015, the ministry reconvened the expert panel that was established in 2013 to provide recommendations to the government on home inspector qualifications. At the panel meeting, the ministry indicated that the goal was to introduce legislation.

The ministry will continue to seek input from stakeholders as we move forward in the legislative process. You have asked a number of detailed implementation questions, however, at this time, decision regarding those details have not been made.

The government must work through the legislative process before specific regulatory framework can be developed. This means that a bill must be introduced in the legislature and, if passed by our legislature, receive royal assent to become law. The new law would then provide the government the authority to develop regulations with detailed requirements for the home inspection industry.

Signed

David Orazetti

I have received some “go away, don’t bother me, your issue is not important” letters in the past, but this one was by far the most disappointing I have ever received. If you have had the opportunity to follow my column on this issue you

would know that I have been investigating the Liberal Government on this issue for many, many months. I managed to get through to one of their Media Advisors back in the fall of 2015; a lady by the name of Sue Carroll. I sent repeated requests for answers and she finally replied on December 3, 2015. You could simply take her reply and, almost word for word, it's identical to this letter from the minister. Did Minister Orazetti really take the time here to respond to this urgent issue that could protect Ontario home buyers.....I doubt he even read the letter; he was likely briefed at best.

Let's face it, Minister Orazetti, you and your ministry are hiding behind boilerplate excuses. Your first paragraph states you have a "mandate letter" from the Premier herself, which was sent to you in 2014 to be acted upon. That's over 2 years ago. How long would someone in the private sector be on the job if they ignored their boss's orders for two years?

Your second paragraph acknowledges you have had an expert panel involved since 2013. That's three years ago! This panel of experts, who dug into their own pockets to pay for their expenses, meals, lodging, you even refused to pay for them to park their cars in Toronto, provided you with a clear document in November of 2013 that outlines how you should proceed. It is estimated they are out of pocket close to \$75,000.00, plus their own working time to provide you with this report. Never mind the quarter of million dollars you paid "Consultants" to chair this panel.

Your third paragraph states, "will continue to seek input from stakeholders." Mr. Orazetti, you have all the stakeholder information you will ever need. You have in your possession this panel report. You have in your possession the National Home Inspection Certification Council (NHICC), "Dacum for Home Inspectors," which outlines the occupational standard for home inspectors. This document was developed by 19 professionals who hold certifications from the five major home inspection organizations represented in Ontario. You also have had in your possession, since the spring of 2013, a copy of the strategic plan on how to "License the Private Home Inspection Profession." This was presented to you by the NHICC, who are the off shoot of the CMHC program that was developed in the early 2000's to license home inspectors. I am aware that the CSA 770 Home Inspection Standards Document, which your government paid out \$40,000.00 of Ontario taxpayers' dollars for, will be released next month. If I know that, then you certainly must have similar information.

With respect to my questions, three straight forward questions that come down to a simple, "When will you do your job and quit stalling behind the excuse

of needing more input?” “When will you quit hiding behind boiler plate answers and provide Ontario Home Buyers the access to skilled, educated and professional home inspectors, who can be hold accountable for their inspections?” Finally, “When do you quit using the excuse of ‘work through the legislative process?’ In April of 2013, the honorable Member for Scarborough West stepped up in the house and asked when this legislation would be forthcoming and the house gave unanimous approval to move ahead here. That’s, again, 3 years ago. Time to step up to the plate, Minister Orazetti; your excuses are wearing thin!

For my readers who have sent dozens and dozens of supporting e-mails, yes, I intend to see this through to implementation. If it comes down to protesting in front of the legislature with a sandwich board on my back, so be it. Too many good, professional volunteer men and women have given of their time and personal funds to see this left on the back burner for yet another “X” number of years. I recently had the pleasure to be on the air in Ottawa for CBC Radio who are now aware of this issue. I am hoping to return to their studios for another interview at some point. In the meantime, I am pleased that the opposition has decided to take up this issue and have had discussions with the office of the PC critic for Minister Orazetti’s ministry. I deeply appreciate my editor’s support at the Kingston Whig. They clearly recognize the problem here.

It’s time homebuyers in Ontario were protected. They deserve nothing less as they make the largest single purchase most families make in a lifetime....their home.