

ASK THE INSPECTOR COLUMN FOR JULY 6, 2106

HEADLINE: BUYING A HOME IS GOING TO CHANGE.....A LOT!

For some months now there has been activity on a number of fronts with respect to radon, energy values and the licensing of home inspectors. This activity is at the point where changes are likely to happen in the not too distant future. With that in mind, an update on each of these issues seems appropriate.

RADON TESTING FOR RENTAL RESIDENCES

The Canadian Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (CARST) and their association with the Ontario Lung Association (OLA) have convinced the Ontario government to implement stronger regulations with respect to some occupancies in homes and apartments. They have called on the province to mandate testing and mitigation of radon in basement rental units. In fact, it should be for all below grade residential units as there is more than one where a family member occupies the “granny suite” in the basement. If this legislation passes, real estate agents will be required to recommend all of these residential occupancies are radon tested during the purchase process. This is going to create a longer closing time as even the base testing requires no less than seven days.

The OLA states that approximately 850 people die on Ontario from the effects of radon, second only to lung cancer caused from smoking. Radon is a heavy gas and tends to collect in the lower level of a home, specifically the basement and at the moment there is no obligation for landlords and homeowners to test for radon. The OLA wants this requirement added into the updates now being considered for the Residential Tenancies Act. Mike Holmes has put his media presence behind this push to enact this regulation.

ENERGY AUDITS FOR ALL NEW AND EXISTING HOMES FOR SALE

This will be the third time this idea has been “run up the pole” and, this time, it appears it is going to fly. Back in 2009 when the Green Energy Act was introduced, this was proposed and it was lobbied out of the act. The Ontario government tried again a year later, with similar results and then Energy Minister, George Smitherman, was lobbied on this issue and it was shelved. This time around it’s part of the major legislation in the “Climate Change Action Plan” and, based upon

my sources at Queens Park, this time it will happen. I will quote from section 7.1 on the plan. "...the energy rating will be included in the real estate listing. These audits are intended to be provided free of charge (my note: this was one of the major stumbling blocks in the past, who pays for the audit)... The Home Energy Rating and Disclosure program will improve consumer awareness by allowing homebuyers to compare homes by energy rating. It will also encourage uptake of retrofit incentive programs. To meet the expected demand for home energy auditors, Ontario will support development of energy audit training programs and will further consult before launching this program in 2019."

Some education on the value of these audits and how to interpret the number provided by the energy auditor will have to be done. We do a large number of heritage homes; it's a specialty for us. Retrofitting a century home for a rating of over 70 will be costly; this may hamper sales in this area. A heritage home buyer will have to compare these ratings and decide which homes works for them. That said, if a newer home comes in, in the same range with the programs available like the one Enbridge is offering, it would or should make a significant difference. There is going to have to be some understanding of the rating and this will take time.

HOME INSPECTION LICENSING

In the recent cabinet shuffle, David Orazietti was moved to another post and Marie-France Lalonde has taken over as Minister for Government and Consumer Services. Premier Wynne's mandate letter has been retained and this gives direction to continue with the legislation for licensing of Home Inspectors. MPP Han Dong's private member bill is still pending and it is still unknown how the province intends to enact this proposed legislation, either by using this bill or introducing their own government legislation on this subject. I am listed to speak at the committee reviewing MPP Dong's bill; once I hear more I will advise. My last correspondence with former Minister Orazietti stated that his ministry was committed to this legislation this year.

I intend to follow up with Minister Lalonde shortly on this issue, fully intending to keep this issue front and center of the government's agenda.

By Christmas of 2018, a scant 30 months from now, I anticipate that all of these changes and legislation will be enacted, again based upon my sources. Understanding what you are buying, what you are renting to a tenant and being

able to hire an educated, trained and licensed home inspector will be three major changes in how a home sale is enacted.

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