

ASK THE INSPECTOR COLUMN FOR MAY 25, 2016

HEADLINE: HOME INSPECTORS: TIME FOR SOME FACTS

Since January, there has been a two pronged approach to getting our provincial government moving on the promised licensing of this business. Back in March, MPP for Spadina, Han Dong, introduced a private members bill for licensing. I wrote a series on this subject, which caused some reaction in Queens Park, especially when the Premier stated that this was to happen in 2016. David Orazietti, Minister of Government and Consumer Affairs (MGCS) was drawn into this, and since that time, has been approachable on the plans for this year.

As expected, when this hit the media, those in the industry who have been working with questionable certifications, either through the internet or portraying that a collection of seminars was suitable to deem them fully knowledgeable, began their verbal discounting of the coming standards. Both locally and from contacts I have around the province, I hear comments like, "This is never going to happen, they can't put me out of business" and "Everyone in this business will be given a license, it will only be anyone new." One agent called me, thoroughly disgusted, after hearing the comment, "Don't worry, I will still be around to make sure your deals go through!"

I will quote an e-mail I received from Minister Orazietti on May 11, 2016. "We are on track as ministry staff continue to work hard on the development of a legislative framework to regulate home inspectors in the province. I remain committed to introducing home inspector legislation this year, and this important issue is still a top priority for our government and my ministry."

Now, I have personally spoken to Minister Orazietti on this, have had multiple e-mail conversations with his staff and, while everyone takes politicians with a grain of salt, I believe Minister Orazietti on this one. There is some issue as to how they can blend their legislation with that of MPP Han Dong, but it can be done and has been done in the past.

The comments received were expected, but disappointing. Based on what I know, there will be an education standard, a training and certification designation and background checks done. There will be a "sunset clause" which will give ample time to get the necessary upgrades to meet the licensing requirements. Will this put them out of business, yes.... if they aren't qualified. As far as the "everyone gets a license" that's not totally accurate, either.

WHO DO YOU HIRE AS YOUR HOME INSPECTOR RIGHT NOW?

Minister Oraziotti and his staff have been advised that there are third party, verified, professional, trained and educated inspectors in Ontario now. These inspectors carry the NHI, RHI, CCHI or the US equivalent to the RHI, known as the ACI. Two other provinces, which are licensed, recognize two of these four certifications. Unfortunately, they recognized some others and are now in the process of correcting and tightening their standards. MGCS is aware of what the other provinces are experiencing, and know that keeping the associations out of the licensing process has been recommended in order to clear the path for an independent licensing authority. Not unlike a licensed carpenter or electrician, who holds a provincial trade license and do not have to belong to a union or association to work, the same is expected here. Until licensing is enacted, if you are buying a home, hire a home inspector who proudly carries the NHI, RHI (ACI) or CCHI initials after his name. If he/she does not, find someone who does. You have a right to know this person brings a respected training and experience standard to your home inspection.

HOME INSPECTION STANDARD

Back in the middle of March, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) released the long awaited CAN/CSA-A770-16 National Standard for Canada: Home Inspection. This “Made in Canada” standard, as to how a home inspector should complete an individual home inspection, has been in the works for over two years, had a “blue chip” advisory board from the start and received hundreds of recommendations from private citizens and individual home inspectors before it was released. This standard was funded by the provinces of Alberta and Ontario and, while it is not mandated as yet, in my opinion it’s simply a matter of time before both governments integrate this standard within their licensing program. There are at least five different “standards” used today. There is no reason that any home inspector cannot go on-line, buy a copy of this new standard and integrate it into his/her home inspection right now. This standard is more comprehensive, more detailed and certainly reflects our environment more than any of the others. Ask your home inspector “are you using the CAN-CSA-A770 -16 Standard for my home inspection?. If not, why not?”

TAKE FIVE MINUTES, CHECK THEIR BACKGROUND....DON'T HIRE ON PRICE ONLY!!

As the old saying goes, "If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, wait til you hire an amateur." This is one business you truly get what you pay for. Ask the questions as Mike Holmes says. Once you have established that they are an NHI, RHI (ACI) or CCHI then ask:

- 1: How long have you been in business?
- 2: Is this a full time occupation? (Home inspection has far too many part-timers making a quick, after hour's dollar.)
- 3: Are you a licensed tradesman? (Nothing beats years of actual construction experience.)
- 4: How many inspections have you done? (If they say 500 to 600, divide that by the number of years they have been in business. In a case where they have been around for 10 years, 50 to 60 a year is not a full time number.)
- 5: Can you provide me with references? (A professional inspector will make them available or put them on his/her web site with at least some full names to support the comment.)

Based upon what I expect, Ontario homebuyers will have some protection by the end of this year. Until then, do your homework. The inspector's opinion is an important step in your due diligence, so get a professional, experienced opinion.

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