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Home Inspections: Top Ten Problems

Each homebuyer has different ideas of what constitutes an ideal home; these notions are often based on specific aesthetic preferences. But one thing that unites all potential homebuyers is the desire to find a fundamentally sound home—in areas beyond the immediate sweep of the eye—and that will provide a safe, comfortable, and efficient foundation for their life behind a new door.

This is where the services of a home inspector come in. During a home inspection, at least 30 areas of the home are placed under the home inspector's "microscope." I've compiled the ten most common weaknesses uncovered in a typical home inspection.

If left unaddressed, these problems could cost you thousands of dollars over time. Knowing what to look for and performing your own thorough pre-inspection will help you identify areas for repair or improvement before they become costly problems.

1. Damp Basement:

If a mildew odour is present, the inspector will detect it, as it cannot be masked or eliminated. A mildew odour is often the first sign of basement dampness. The inspector will also examine the walls, checking for any signs of whitish mineral deposits just above the floor, and will note whether you feel confident enough to store items on the floor.

Repairs can range from \$200 to \$ 15,000, and this cost ultimately affects your home's value. Consider enlisting an expert to ensure you have a firm grasp of the bottom line before moving forward with the sale of your home.

2. Poorly Installed/ Defective Plumbing:

In older homes, plumbing problems and defects are widespread. The inspector will determine whether your home's plumbing is leaking or clogged. Signs of leakage are visible. The inspector will test water pressure by turning on all the faucets in the highest bathroom and then flushing the toilet.

If water sounds audible, it may indicate the home's pipes are too narrow. The inspector will also check for signs of discoloration in the water when a faucet is first turned on. The appearance of discoloured water usually indicates rusted pipes—a water quality issue that should be addressed immediately.

Also, are the pipes copper, galvanized, lead, or a combination of materials?

3. Older/ Poorly-Functioning Heating and Cooling Systems:

Heating/ cooling systems that are older or not properly maintained can pose serious safety and health risks. An inspector will determine your furnace's age and, if it exceeds the average lifespan (15-20 years), will likely recommend replacing it, even if it is still in good condition.

These heat exchangers are irreparable; if damaged, they must be replaced. While replacing these components may seem expensive, a new system will deliver higher efficiency, substantially reduce monthly heating/ cooling costs and benefit your long-term investment.

4. Older/ Unsafe Electrical System:

In older homes, it is common to find undersized services, aluminum wiring, knob-and-tube wiring, or distribution systems that are insufficient or poorly renovated. When an electrical circuit is overloaded, more current flows than it was designed to handle, creating a fire hazard. You'll typically find a 15-amp circuit in a home, with larger service for appliances such as dryers or stoves. If replacing your fuse panel with a circuit panel, expect to pay several hundred dollars.

5. Older/ Leaking Roof:

An asphalt roof typically lasts 15 to 20 years. Leaks through the roof could indicate physical deterioration of the asphalt shingles due to aging or mechanical damage from heavy storms. If you decide your roof requires new shingles, you'll first need to know how many layers are beneath the existing shingles to determine whether the roof must be stripped entirely before installation.

6. Minor Structural Problems:

Typical in older homes, these problems range from cracked plaster to minor foundation shifts. While this variety of problems isn't large enough to cause a real catastrophe, they should be addressed before they grow.

7. Poor Ventilation:

Unvented bathrooms and cooking areas can become breeding grounds for mould and fungi, which, in turn, lead to air quality issues throughout the house and trigger allergic reactions. Mould may also damage plaster and window frames. These problems should be identified and addressed before any permanent damage occurs.

8. Air Leakage:

A cold, drafty home can result from a range of issues, including ill-fitting doors, aged caulking, low-quality weatherstrips, or poor attic seals. This type of repair can usually be handled easily and inexpensively.

9. Security Features:

An inspector will review the standard security features that protect your home, such as the types of locks on doors/ windows/ patio doors, and the smoke or carbon monoxide detectors and their locations throughout the home. Consult an expert to determine what costs to expect if your home is lacking in any of these areas.

10. Drainage/ Grading Problems:

This is the most common problem home inspectors encounter and is a leading cause of damp, mildewed basements. Solutions to this problem may range from installing new gutters and downspouts to regrading the lawn and surrounding property to direct water away from the house.

If your heating system is a forced-air gas system, the heat exchanger will be examined closely, as any cracks can cause carbon monoxide to leak. These heat exchangers are irreparable; if damaged, they must be replaced. While replacing these components may seem expensive, a new system will deliver higher efficiency, substantially reduce monthly heating/ cooling costs and benefit your long-term investment.

Written by Ty Lacroix Realtor

Questions To Ask a London Ontario Home Inspector

[21 questions to ask a London, Ontario home inspector are vital to a thorough house-hunting checklist. Include these questions when choosing the best inspector](#)