

Mike Holmes: Inspections are for sellers



Mike Holmes, Make It Right, Postmedia News
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Too many people think of home inspections as tools for homebuyers only. An inspection is a critical part of any home purchase — I'd never advise anyone to buy a home without one — but I'm here to tell you that inspections are as useful for sellers as they are for buyers.

You're probably thinking, "Why should I pay for an inspection on the home I'm about to sell when I'm already about to pay for one on the house I'm about to buy?" I get that. Inspections cost money. They take time. And a vendor is not always legally required to guarantee the condition of a home for sale, so there's no obligation to do a pre-listing inspection.

But there are a ton of reasons to hire a qualified, registered home inspector to evaluate your home before you list it. Here are the most important.

Set the right price

Selling a home is an emotional process. You've invested years of your life — and thousands of your hard-earned dollars — into those four walls. You know what the building means to you, and you have a pretty good idea of how much money you'd like to recover on your investment. Emotion, however, is the enemy of good judgment. The average seller is unable to see the real condition of his or her house when setting an asking price. Emotion trumps judgment, the seller inflates the price of the house, and the property takes ages to sell.

A pre-listing inspection can help you determine your home's true value. A qualified inspector will go through your home and accurately assess what's good and what's bad about the building. Small maintenance jobs that you put off years ago may have grown into large problems. New problems may have cropped up since you last had an inspection done (which, if you're like most people, was when you bought the house). On the other hand, expensive renovations may have boosted the value.

Know where you stand

Negotiations are part of every home sale. Buyers and sellers regularly go back and forth, haggling over even hundreds of dollars on the price of a million-dollar property. A pre-listing inspection can put you in a position of strength during those negotiations. It helps you prioritize repairs — those you'll pay for yourself and those you'll pass on to the buyer. It gives you an idea of the cost to make all necessary repairs (when you combine the inspection with repair estimates from reputable contractors). And it eliminates the chance of a greedy buyer overinflating the cost to repair the same items (and seeking a big discount on the sale price).

Market the home properly

If you've ever read descriptions of homes for sale, you've seen the salespitches: “a handyman's dream,” “great potential” or “a fixer-upper.” These aren't written to accurately describe the condition of the house; they're written to attract buyers. Who knows if they are true?

A pre-listing inspection helps you market your home properly, because it tells you the real condition of your house. It gives you an opportunity to use real words to describe the property's condition. Say, “new roof required” or “needs no work” — and mean it.

A pre-listing inspection also boosts your home's cosmetic appeal. Never mind staging suggestions or other lipstick-and-mascara repairs that hide real problems. A pre-listing inspection gives you a checklist of items that can make a house look better, sell faster and, most important, function properly: Trim the trees that overhang the house, re-caulk the windows, replace weather stripping, throw on a coat of paint. Taking care of small jobs such as these can improve your home's appeal and make it sell faster.

Always show good faith

Finally, by paying for a pre-listing home inspection, you show potential buyers that you're open and honest about the condition of your home. It says more than words can: that you're serious about selling, that you're not hiding any surprises, and that you want to conduct a fair transaction that benefits both parties. Disclosure goes a long way toward building trust, openness and good faith — core values in any negotiation.

By showing you the strengths and weaknesses of your home, a pre-listing home inspection takes some of the stress out of the selling process. It helps you market the home better. It helps you set the right price. And it shows you're serious about doing business. Inspections aren't just for buyers anymore.

*Catch Mike in his new series, **Holmes Inspection**, airing Thursdays at 8 p.m. ET/PT on HGTV. For more information, visit hgtv.ca. For more information on home renovations, visit makeitright.ca*