

LETTERS

Real-estate agents should let inspectors do job

Your March 22 article "Home inspectors loved and hated" needs some clarification. Many vendors do not realize a well-done building inspection benefits them in the long run because their worst nightmare could turn out to be a suit for a latent or hidden defect months or years after the sale.

A good inspection is as vital to a vendor as it is to a purchaser. Hidden-defect cases are becoming all too common because of superficial inspections that fail to reveal all the apparent defects.

The article mentions the Quebec branch of the local Home Inspectors Association hopes to obtain certification in about two years. The article states I dismiss "the notion of professional certification" and that I feel my 40 years of experience and track record are all anyone needs to know. The fact is I support professionals doing building inspection, but I believe those professions already exist in the form of the architects, engineers and technologists who are already a part of certi-

fied organizations and many of whom are specifically trained to do this work.

The real problem with the lack of good-quality building inspectors is that the ones who should be doing it—senior architects, civil engineers or technologists with over 10 years of renovation experience—have been priced out of the market because almost anyone is allowed to do a building inspection. My fee rate is not as extraordinary as the article makes out. It is the standard rate for an architect at my level of experience.

The real problem regarding building inspection came about as a result of Quebec's new Civil Code (1994). Article 1726 states a building inspection can be performed by just about anyone, including the purchaser, as long as they are "prudent and diligent and without any need of expert assistance."

That has opened the field to anyone and everyone. Most building inspectors today are incapable of revealing all the apparent defects of a building.

What frightens agents and vendors in regard to my work is that I include the high probability or the suspicion of a defect in my reports. I will include comments on the current building code as it applies to older properties regardless of when they were built. Building codes provide current (minimum) standards of health and safety, and that is what a purchaser needs to know.

Code compliance is totally ignored by most non-professional building inspectors, and those are then the very issues that become the basis of latent-defect lawsuits.

The real-estate agent interviewed in the article states his agents will not do business with some inspectors, citing "dishonest characters, unqualified practitioners and those who are determined to have an adversarial relationship." As someone often on the receiving end of agents' venom, I would ask agents to back off and let building inspectors do their work independently.

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