

NATIONAL HOME INSPECTOR CERTIFICATION COUNCIL

Setting Expectations

A home inspection is intended to help reduce your risk in buying a home. The primary purpose is to identify significant issues and deficiencies, and does not focus on cosmetic concerns. It is not a guarantee, warranty or insurance on any existing or future conditions.

A home inspection is intended to substantially increase your knowledge of the features of your new home and to point out the significant deficiencies that may adversely affect its performance. As such it is critically important that the client or a capable representative attends the inspection to see and experience firsthand the conditions encountered.

For the most part a home inspection is an educational tool requiring the client's participation. We appreciate that circumstances can occasionally make it impossible for the client to be on site at the time of the inspection. The written report however, will never replace the information achieved from a one-on-one interaction with the inspector.

Another key element from a contractual viewpoint is the clients understanding of what is within the "Scope of Work" – aka: the Contract and awareness of the inspectors "General Exclusions and Limit of Liability".

Inevitably, there are times when things can go wrong. Some defects may have been hidden (by storage or furniture for instance) at the time of the inspection or may not reveal themselves until you have lived in the house for a while. A shower for instance, may leak only after the water has been running for several minutes or a basement may only let water in during certain weather conditions, such as heavy downpour or at specific times of the year. Often there are historical clues to previous or potential problems, stains on walls and ceilings, rotting wood, poor drainage etc. However, in the absence of such "visible clues" or where they are hidden in some way - by decorations, storage or coverings for instance - future or even existing problems may be impossible to identify or predict if they are concealed.

Typically most inspectors will re-inspect and discuss any significant problems. So it is best to contact the inspector requesting a "call back" to review your concerns.

Another question that often arises is providing cost estimates. Generally most home inspectors do not quote prices for repairs. In some provinces restrictions may be mandated by regulation. Some may argue that the client needs this type of information to make an informed decision and balanced judgement, related to the impact of the cost. Typically most home inspectors can quote an unofficial (ball park) and undocumented price range for works, however when the range spans several thousand dollars, and generally includes a number of unknown variables it creates an opportunity for potential disagreement and conflict, by possibly offering misleading information.

In any circumstances where the repairs required are significant enough for buyer and seller to be concerned, it is best that you **obtain at least two written quotes**, from licensed/qualified contractors. In that way, both parties will know the reality of the situation and can proceed from there.

Sometimes a Contractors' advice and that of your home inspector may be in conflict. Remember that the home inspector works for your best interest and not on securing a financial gain. As an example - when suggesting that basement leakage may be resolved by attention to eavestrough, grading and window wells, the inspector has both the problem and the balance of your cost concerns in mind. A contractor called to view the same scenario, may suggest a ten thousand dollar plus approach. Both will work. However you must choose which remedy you prefer and can afford.

Your report reference may also be made to "**further investigation by qualified personnel**" that may not be discipline specific. It is the client's responsibility to contact – again as an example - an appropriately qualified electrician for electrical problems or a structural engineer for structural defects, before continuing with their transaction.

Bottom line – set reasonable expectations, read and understand your contract terms, understand "what is" and "what is not" part of the work within the contract. And last but not, if things go wrong – call your home inspector to provide notice of your concerns. Communication is often the best way to resolve those concerns.