

Toronto Star: Sept. 22, 2014

Home inspections don't catch all problems: Roseman

We go to bat for homebuyers who find nasty surprises after a home inspection indicates things are OK. One got a refund and one did not.



Stephanie Law / Stephanie Law

A new homeowner says he was not happy with the services provided by the home inspection firm owned by TV handyman Mike Holmes.

By: [Ellen Roseman](#) On Your Side, Published on Mon Sep 22 2014

TV handyman Mike Holmes makes it right with construction problems. He also owns a home inspection firm that promises to remove nasty surprises from a new purchase.

“You can expect a home inspector to give you a thorough assessment of every single part of any home and help you understand what it means,” he says on [his website](#).

Lyndon Tucker paid \$1,243 for an inspection, about double the going rate, before buying a \$390,000 house in Kingsville, Ont. He later found serious problems that did not appear in the report.

When his kitchen and bathroom sinks and toilets didn't drain properly, he told Mike Holmes Inspections, he called in plumbers who said the venting was inadequate. They recommended replacing the whole system, since his health was at risk from a buildup of sewage gases.

"It is inexcusable that several code violations were missed that affect my safety," he said. "I paid a premium for the Mike Holmes brand and received nothing in return."

Tucker contacted me after not getting a response from the company. I told him that inspection contracts always deny responsibility for any defects not detected.

Amanda Heath, a Holmes Group spokeswoman, said Tucker confirmed he had read the terms of the agreement.

"The inspection is not technically exhaustive and all encompassing," said term (3). "The client acknowledges that, as a result of the limitations of a visual inspection, some detectable deficiencies may go unnoted in the inspection report. The client accepts these limitations."

In Tucker's case, his home inspection did outline numerous deficiencies, Heath said. He was advised that the issues required further investigation by licensed trades as soon as possible.

His reply: "While the inspector did outline numerous deficiencies throughout the home, he missed the ones that could kill me. The few plumbing problems noted in the report gloss over the fact that none of the plumbing meets basic code and will need to be completely replaced."

Contrast his treatment with that of Chris Papatolis, who bought a house after seeing a home inspection by [Carson Dunlop](#), a Toronto firm founded in 1978.

"Once I moved in, I had a couple of electricians in to check on things. Both said the floor plugs were supposed to have covers and be made of metal. None of them are. Carson Dunlop refused to take responsibility. It will cost about \$1,000 to replace all 12 floor plugs in my bungalow," he said.

President Alan Carson promised to reach out to Papatolis, who was not actually his client. The report was paid for by the home seller to give to prospective buyers.

Papatolis will get a refund of the inspection cost (\$491.55), covering about half the cost of redoing the receptacles. He thanked me, as did Carson, for helping them to reach a settlement.

Mike Holmes is known for straight talk and excellent service. But in Tucker's case, I feel the service he received, especially the lack of communication, wasn't up to code.

When I asked Holmes Group spokeswoman Heath for consumer advice, she sent some worthwhile tips:

- A home inspection is not a guarantee, but an exercise in risk reduction.
- Don't expect an inspection will find every issue in a home, especially if these issues require invasive procedures (such as going behind walls or moving items) to find them.
- Bring in a specialist if the inspector advises doing a more thorough followup inspection on a specific component of the house. Do it as soon as possible.

Ellen Roseman writes about personal finance and consumer issues. You can reach her at eroseman@thestar.ca or www.ellenroseman.com.