

Inspect before you seal the deal

By David Stonehouse
Ottawa Citizen

Four times, Tracey Ross was on the brink of buying what she thought was the perfect family home.

But advice from a home inspector pulled her back every time-saving her thousands of dollars in unexpected repairs.

At first blush, each of the homes looked well kept and in good repair, says the 31-year-old Ottawa lawyer.

"And then we got Paul; he crushed my dreams," laughs Ms. Ross.

Joking aside, she is grateful to home inspector Paul Wilson for his advice, which, in one case, spared her about \$100,000 in repairs.

"He saved me every time," Ms. Ross says, "because there were things I couldn't see."

He spotted serious problems such as a shifting foundation, pervasive mould, electricity that was not grounded, plumbing that was not up to snuff, missing or hanging insulation.

But some buyers are opting to skip the inspection. "Yes, people are buying houses without having the inspections done first," says Ren Molnar, a long-time Ottawa home inspector known for his weekly home-improvement radio shows.

He says buyers who skipped the home inspection have been calling him in a panic after discovering major repairs need to be done.

Mr. Molnar says there isn't much he can do if the home has already been sold.

"Every day, I meet stressed-out individuals buying a home, being forced to make the largest purchase of their lives in minutes rather than days," says Mr. Wilson, who has never witnessed such a hot market in his 20-year career.

"Many naive and unsuspecting purchasers have bought nightmares recently, and they are kicking themselves for not having had a home inspection done as part of the condition of purchase," he says.

"I've had clients crying," says Mr. Wilson, adding that some buyers are considering legal action against vendors.

"We're getting calls now from lawyers who want us to go and inspect houses that their clients bought in good faith, assuming that their house was in good order, and now they are finding all kinds of problems," he says.

A home inspection usually costs between \$300 and \$400 and includes a written report.

Mr. Wilson says inspectors don't just focus on the negative; they also point out the positive aspects of the home too.

"We're not deal killers or deal busters. We just want to give people an accurate picture."