



## **Tim Purtill, Canspec Homeservices Ltd.**

CSI Househunter – Inspectors like Tim Purtill search for Clues that your future dream home could be a nightmare In disguise.

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What you see may not be what you get

### **Inspectors can put first-time buyers at ease about their big-ticket purchase**

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JENNIFER BROWN, SPECIAL TO THE STAR

After eight long months of searching for their first home, Jennifer Long and her then-fiancé James thought they had finally found their dream home.

The 20-year-old "link home" near McCowan and Steeles was exactly what they had been looking for and was priced right within their budget. "We loved it. Everything was upgraded and freshly painted with new carpet," recalls Long. "We thought we'd be able to save some money because we wouldn't have to do the upgrades ourselves."

They submitted an offer on the home, but stipulated they wanted a home inspection first.

When they arrived at the house the day of the inspection, the inspector was already on the roof. When he came down, he told them he had discovered "a funny little chimney." He then examined the attic before confirming the bad news: The Long's dream home really was too good to be true.

"The realtor told us the house had been a grow-op," says Long. "It was such a heartbreaker. It was the perfect size and close to work."

The couple went on to find a better house in Durham Region and now realize the heartbreak could have been much greater if they hadn't insisted on the inspection before buying. They could have been stuck with a house they could neither sell nor insure.

The inspector, Tim Purtill of Canspec Homeservices Ltd. in Newmarket, told them the chimney led to a bedroom, where he noticed the ceiling had been patched. "He pulled back the carpet and discovered a piece of plywood had been put down and, when he pulled that back, there was duct work that had been run from the basement right up through the middle of the house," says Long.

An extensive amount of mould was also discovered in the attic and basement. There was no smell because it had been freshly painted, but the telltale signs remained — signs Purtill is all too familiar with. He's

discovered about two-dozen homes that were former grow-ops — most of which were not disclosed — since he started working as a home inspector in 1997.

Several of Purtill's clients refer to him as a crime scene investigator for the home-buying set. Where novice homebuyers see fresh renovations, Purtill often sees cover-up.

Uncovering the clues to a former grow-op takes home inspection to the extreme, but, for the most part, he and his fellow inspectors provide a service he describes as "50 per cent discovery and 50 per cent education."

"We can't eliminate the risk of home ownership, but we can certainly help minimize the risk," says Purtill, a registered home inspector with the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors (OAHI, <http://www.oahi.com>).

A good inspector will point out the limitations of an inspection, which is defined as a visual review of the readily accessible aspects of a home.

It should include examination of the roof, structure and foundation, exterior finishes, windows and doors, lot grading, interior finishes, plumbing, heating, cooling, electrical, fireplaces and chimneys, attic and attic insulation, as well as checking the basement for dampness. Some inspectors will videotape the attic and roof for review.

Inspectors should also advise when further investigation by other experts is warranted — such as with an aging furnace.

A home inspection should take between 2 1/2 and three hours, depending on the age and size of the house, and cost between \$300 and \$500.

Some inspectors recommend budgeting 3 per cent of the cost of the house for maintenance in the first year or two, to cover items that may have been neglected by the previous owners.