

**139 Evans Avenue, Toronto**

**Inspection Report**

**December 14, 2016**



**COMPANY INFORMATION**

- Professional Engineer (**P**rofessional **E**ngineers of **O**ntario)
- B.A.Sc. - Civil Engineering (University of Toronto)
- 30 years Inspection Experience  
(14<sup>+</sup> years with **Carson, Dunlop & Associates**)
- Over 12,000 Homes Inspected

**PETER YEATES**



**INSPECTIONS**

156 FIRST AVENUE  
TORONTO, ON  
M4M 1X1

(416) 422-1571

WWW.YEATESINSPECT.COM

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## **Inspection Report**

### **Overall Condition:**

This is a solidly built double-brick home that has had a number of renovations/updates and is considered to be in above average condition compared to similar homes in the area.

### **Roofing, Flashings and Chimneys:**

The roof is surfaced with premium-grade asphalt shingles. The shingles are 5 years old and were found to be in good condition. Asphalt shingles of this type have a typical total life expectancy of 17 to 19 years.

The garage roof is older and near the end of its life. Since it's a garage, it would be OK to wait and monitor for leakage before reshingling.

There are two masonry chimneys. The central chimney is mutual with the neighbour to the north and is felt to be in serviceable condition – realign the crooked flue screen though. The southeast chimney has been rebuilt above roof level and is in good condition. It is not used by any appliances and could eventually be removed.

### **Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

-The roof was inspected with binoculars.

### **Exterior:**

The exterior brickwork is generally good condition, but there are some localized areas of spalling (flaking) at the east wall in particular, but also on the south wall. Most of it is felt to be minor and not worthy of brick replacement, but the two damaged bricks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor southeast window sill should be chipped out and replaced. Localized replacement of missing mortar would be desirable on a maintenance-related basis.

The synthetic "cedar" siding on the front gable appears to be the same vintage as the roof and is in good condition.

The aluminum eavestroughs and downspouts are in good overall repair.

The front porch floor boards are older and deteriorated in some areas (i.e. closer to the west edge). They have been patched to extend their life. Eventually, it will be necessary to cut out rotted sections and replace with new boards – while labour intensive, the materials cost is relatively low.

The rear deck is certainly not new, but is in satisfactory condition. It would benefit from staining.

The garage is older, but is actually a little better constructed than many of the neighbour's wood frame garages. The insulbrick siding is old and worn in some areas, but the garage is considered to be quite serviceable overall. Squirrels have chewed at the northeast corner of the garage roof trim – monitor and screen this area off if necessary.

The grade of the driveway close to the south side of the house is less than ideal. Fortunately, the interior of the foundation is protected with a dimpled plastic membrane – see the “interior” section for more details. If the driveway is ever resurfaced in future, it would be best to have it sloped to drain towards the middle and on out to the street.

**Minor Deficiencies:**

-The front porch stairs should have a handrail.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

-Exterior inspection from ground level.  
-There is only very limited access below the rear deck for inspection.

**Structure:**

The concrete block foundations support solid masonry exterior walls. The house appears to be in good overall structural condition. The common wall is also brick. The roof framing is conventional stick style with pine (or similar) roof boards.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

-The attic was inspected from the access hatch.  
-Walls were spotchecked only.  
-98% of the interior foundation wall area was obscured by finishes.

**Electrical:**

The house has its original fused electrical service with an updated circuit breaker panel. The service size may have originally been 90-amps (based on the presence of one 90-amp fuse and one 100-amp main fuse). Although 60 and 100 amp services are more commonly heard of, 90-amps was a standard upgrade size back when the house was built. From a practical point of view, it is felt that the service size should prove to be quite adequate. If desired for insurance reasons, it may be possible to simply change the 90-amp main fuse to 100-amps (parts cost is less than \$20) if desired - consult with an electrician or Toronto Hydro.

The wiring has been upgraded to most areas of the house, but we found two operating outlets at the front 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bedrooms that appear to be connected to the original knob-and-tube wiring.

Knob-and-tube wiring is very common in the area (and is still present in many homes across the City that are more than 65 years old). It is even still permitted under the current Electrical Code and is considered to be a safe method of wiring by the Electrical Safety Authority: [http://www.esasafe.com/pdf/Flash\\_Notices/09-09-FL.pdf](http://www.esasafe.com/pdf/Flash_Notices/09-09-FL.pdf)

Nonetheless, for reasons more political than scientific, many insurance providers won't insure houses with knob and tube wiring and you may have to switch insurance companies, we advise you check with your provider. We would also suggest contacting Dave Slack at David Slack Insurance Brokers (1-800-971-1363 or 416-992-6695) as they will typically insure homes with knob-and-tube wiring provided that they have been inspected by us and the wiring is found to be in good condition (as is the case here). A few other insurance companies will also insure knob-and-tube wiring.

Realistically though, this type of wiring is not going to become popular again and our best recommendation would be to replace it. A very ballpark figure for replacement would be \$2,000 to \$4,000, but this depends on a more detailed analysis of its actual location – which is beyond the scope of this inspection. Consult several electricians for actual quotations.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

-For safety reasons, the main disconnect switch was not operated.  
-Electrical components concealed behind furniture and wall, ceiling and floor finishes cannot be inspected.

**Heating:**

Heating is provided by a hot water system powered by a 90,000 BTU/hr mid-efficiency gas-fired hot water boiler that is 8 years old. This is a good quality cast iron boiler that could last 30 years or more. It was found to be operable at the time of the inspection.

The basement has electric heaters. The heater at the bottom of the basement stairs has been disconnected as the breaker was needed for the ductless heat pump installation. It could be hooked up to a small pony panel/disconnect switch if necessary – but monitor first to see if it is even needed at all.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bathroom has electric radiant floor heat that was found to be operable when tested.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

- The heat exchanger is not visible.
- Safety devices not tested.
- Although we have no reason to suspect that one is present, it should be noted that checking the premises for buried oil tanks is not included in the inspection or the Standards of Practice.
- Radiator valves are not operated. Try not to operate the valves, if at all possible, as this can cause them to leak at the stems.

**Air Conditioning/Heat pump:**

Cooling is provided by a ductless (split-type) combined heat pump/air conditioning system mounted in the main stairwell. The unit is rated at 12,000 BTU/hr and was just installed this past summer. It is understood that it is actually a rental unit. At the time of the inspection, it was too cold outside to test the air conditioning (running the A/C when the temperature is below 16°C can damage the compressor).

It should be realized that units like these are not intended to evenly cool the whole house. They are intended to generally reduce ambient humidity and provide a degree of cooling to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, in particular. While this unit can be used in heating mode when it is not too cold outside, we would recommend sticking to conventional cooling only (due to electricity costs and heat distribution characteristics of the unit).

**Insulation:**

The attic is insulated with fibreglass and mineral wool insulation. The insulation is uneven – ranging from R-15 to R-34. Ideally, more insulation would be added to bring the level up to R-50. This would cost roughly \$1,500 to \$2,000 and up, but it should be realized that it would take a long time for this cost to be recouped via energy savings.

When the house was first built, the walls were not insulated, and this is still the case for most of the walls. It is suspected, though, that insulation was retrofitted into at least some walls during the course of the various renovations. Patched application holes in the living room bay window indicate that insulation has been blown in (likely cellulose based on the size of the application holes, but there is no access to verify).

The basement walls were found to be insulated with a good amount of fibreglass insulation (about R-12) where spotchecked.

The portion of the bedroom floor over the front porch may be cool in winter. There is potential for blowing insulation (like cellulose) into the porch ceiling space or even removing the ceiling and spray foaming the floor. This could be costly. Consult some specialists for quotes.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

- The attic was inspected from the access hatch.
- Walls were spotchecked only.
- Continuity of air/vapour barrier not verified.
- Although we did not see any obvious asbestos installations, it should be noted that checking for asbestos (which may be present in many products and materials) is not included in the inspection or the Standards of Practice.

**Plumbing:**

The incoming City water supply pipe is not visible where it enters the house (due to wall finishes and insulation), but is  $\frac{3}{4}$ " copper where visible. The owner reports that the service was upgraded 10 years ago. Water pressure does tend to drop noticeably with multiple fixtures flowing simultaneously, but this is not uncommon in older areas. This could be a function of the street pressure or it is possible that the main water line has not been upgraded all the way in from the street. The City may be able to provide more information on the subject. Supply plumbing within the house is mostly copper with some PEX plastic (not KITEC) in more recently renovated areas.

The visible waste plumbing is a combination of cast iron and ABS plastic. Although these materials are commonly used and considered to be very effective from a practical point of view, cast iron waste plumbing is currently an issue for some insurance companies (their prejudice is not considered to be warranted in our opinion). There are still a number of insurance companies without this particular bias. It is probably easier to change insurance companies than the waste plumbing.

The 175-litre electric water heater is 11 years old. They have a typical life expectancy of about 15 years. Once the 15 year mark is reached, we recommend replacing it as failures can occur suddenly in older units and typically involve significant water leakage in the basement. With the water heater having only a 120-volt feed, heating up of water in the tank could take longer than usual. Perhaps the best way to address this is to replace it with a gas unit sooner rather than later.

With all laundry rooms located upstairs, there is increased potential for leakage. Interestingly, floor drains are not required by Code. Keep the washing machine well-maintained and, if desired, there are special electrically controlled emergency shut-off valves that can be installed on the supply lines. They instantly shut off the water supply to the washing machine if sensors detect any water on the floor.

**Minor Deficiencies:**

- Some old water stains were noted in the kitchen cabinet below the sink. This was due to has been minor leakage around the sink trap plug in the cabinet – monitor and tighten the plug if necessary.
- Superficial crazing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bathroom sink finish likely won't affect its functionality.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

- Concealed plumbing not inspected.
- Tub/sink overflows not tested.
- Isolating/relief valves and main shut-off valve not tested.

**Interior:**

- Interior finishes are in good overall condition. Older plaster shows typical imperfections in some areas.
- The hardwood has been sanded very thin on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and has been face-nailed in an effort to reduce squeaking. While this is typical in older homes, they probably cannot be re-finished anymore.

- The windows are generally older – most with storms, but a few without. Some sash cords are broken. Ideally the windows would be replaced (\$75 and up per square foot) as much for improved operability and maintainability as for improved energy efficiency.
- The living room wood-burning fireplace has not been used for many years. The firebox is shallow and does not appear to be constructed of firebrick. The hearth is also too shallow by modern standards. The damper is out of adjustment. It is suspected that the fireplace probably wouldn't draw very well due to the size of the opening vs. the size of the flue. A gas insert is probably the only viable option.
- The open-sided basement stairs should be fitted with a railing/guard.
- The basement was found to be dry at the time of the inspection. Prior to finishing the basement, an internal waterproofing system was installed. Although it is mostly covered with drywall now, the visible areas show the most common interior waterproofing method whereby an interior membrane catches any potential foundation wall seepage and channels it down to a perimeter catchment drain and ultimately to the sump pump in the furnace room. This is considered to be a very good setup for an older basement. The sump was basically dry, but does operate. As with all older homes, it is still very important to keep eavestroughs and downspouts well maintained to prevent overflow and water accumulations next to the foundation.

**Inspection Methods and Limitations:**

- No comment made on cosmetic aspects of interior finishes.
- CO/smoke detectors and appliances not inspected. One smoke detector and one CO detector are recommended for each level of every home.
- Furniture and storage in some areas of the basement restricted the inspection.
- Drainage tile (if any) not visible.
- In all houses, moisture problems may result in visible or concealed mold growth. Environmental Consultants can assist if this is a concern as a mold inspection is a specialized environmental assessment beyond the scope of the inspection standards.

**Notes:**

This is the inspection report for 139 Evans Avenue, Toronto – performed on December 14, 2016. For the purposes of this report, the front of the house is considered to be facing west. The inspection was performed according to the standards of the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors – see Limitations and Conditions at [www.yeatesinspect.com/lim&cond.htm](http://www.yeatesinspect.com/lim&cond.htm).

Telephone consultation regarding this report is available free of charge – call 416-422-1571. Walkthroughs with the inspector can also be arranged at a typical cost of \$150.