

**144 Simpson Avenue, Toronto**

**Inspection Summary**

October 19, 2004



**COMPANY INFORMATION**

- Professional Engineer** (Professional Engineers of Ontario)
- Registered Home Inspector** (Ontario Association of Home Inspectors)
- B.A.Sc. - Civil Engineering (University of Toronto)
- 14+ years as senior inspector with *Carson, Dunlop and Associates*
- Over 7,000 homes inspected

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**INSPECTIONS**

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## **Inspection Summary**

### **Overall Condition:**

This is a typical quality late 1800's wood frame semi that has been well maintained.

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

**Description:** The sloped roofs are surfaced with asphalt shingles. The rear flat roof is surfaced with a modified bitumen membrane. The chimney is masonry.

**Condition:** The roof was examined with binoculars and through the rear attic window. The asphalt shingles are quite new and in good condition. The small rear dormer roof was not visible/accessible, but is suspected to be newer as well. The rear flat roof membrane is not new, but is in good condition. Water ponds on the front porch roof – should be OK, but monitor for leaks below. The chimney is in good condition.

### **Exterior:**

**Description:** The exterior walls have a brick veneer at the front and stucco and vinyl siding at the sides and rear. The eavestroughs are aluminum.

**Condition:** The exterior is in satisfactory to good overall repair. The front porch floor and associated floor structure have been updated. The southwest porch column is leaning, but at this point, should just be monitored for a few years to see if there is any continuing movement.

The front brick wall has separated from the side wall slightly (not recent) – monitor. Replace the east dryer vent cover – minor.

### **Structure:**

**Description:** The masonry foundations support wood frame exterior walls.

**Condition:** Like several of its neighbours, the house exhibits more than a typical amount of settlement/movement. Interestingly, the foundations of this house are quite level from side to side, but the walls show quite a bit of racking (i.e. the top of the walls have moved to the west several inches, but the base of the walls has stayed in place). This may even have happened during construction 120± years ago. At this point in time, evidence suggests that there is not a lot of movement going on and no remedial action is considered necessary (or in the foreseeable future).

Evidence of old, minor termite damage was noted on joists at the rear of the basement. Riverdale is a termite area so this is not uncommon. The house has been chemically treated and the listing agent reports that the termite treatment warranty has been maintained every year.

Many joists at the rear of the basement have been notched for plumbing pipes. The spans are relatively short so improvement is not a high priority. It would be preferable to strengthen the joists before finishing the ceiling, however. Very minor fire damage was visible at the

northwest corner of the attic – may even have come from the neighbour's house many years ago – no remedial action necessary.

The second floor joists are saggy, but probably not cost-effective to improve. A small supplementary support beam has been added at the front of the basement.

### **Electrical:**

**Description:** The house has a 100-amp electrical service with circuit breakers. Quite a bit of new wiring has been installed, but original knob-and-tube wiring remains in various areas. Some aluminum wiring was installed in the 1970's. This is visible in the basement, but would have to be traced to know its exact destination.

**Condition:** The service size is appropriate and the electrical panel is in good condition.

Many insurance companies discriminate (unreasonably) against knob-and-tube wiring. We can provide the name of an insurance company that insures houses with knob-and-tube wiring, if this is an issue. Nonetheless, replacement of the remaining knob-and-tube would be desirable within the next couple of years – likely \$6,000 and up. A couple of improper knob-and-tube connections in the basement would have to be improved in order to get insurance – (roughly \$200).

Various three-prong outlets aren't really grounded (knob-and-tube has no ground wire). This is not considered to be a problem where only two-prong plugs are to be used (fill the ground slots with caulking/glue where necessary to prevent the use of three-prong plugs). The outlets will be properly grounded when the wiring is updated. The bathroom outlet should be grounded and a GFI safety outlet provided. Outlets in the middle bedroom need to be provided with electrical boxes – likely about \$300 (only a random sampling of outlet interiors was made).

The aluminum wiring may also be an insurance issue (has been known to overheat at connections in some cases) and would preferentially be replaced at the same time as the knob-and-tube.

### **Heating:**

**Description:** Heated by an 8-year-old, 88,000 BTU/hr mid-efficiency forced air gas furnace.

**Condition:** The furnace responded properly when tested. Typical life expectancy is around 15 years statistically. There is a minor gas leak at the gas pipe union just upstream of the gas valve. Contact the Gas Company to have this simple repair done ASAP.

### **Insulation:**

**Description:** Fibreglass insulation with an R-value of about 12 was noted in the attic. Although there is space for insulation in the walls, most are uninsulated.

**Condition:** Once the wiring is updated, the insulation should be upgraded to R-31. While insulation could be added in the walls (e.g. blown in cellulose), the costs would be significant and would likely take many, many years to pay off in energy savings. Improve weatherstripping/caulking/sealing to reduce air infiltration as necessary. The porch floor just south of the front door is actually over the southwest corner of the basement. Keep snow shovelled away from this area (could also be a moisture entry point in heavy rains) – monitor.

### **Plumbing:**

**Description:** The supply pipe from the street is older lead and the house is on a flat rate service. Supply piping within the house is copper. Waste plumbing is cast iron and plastic. The water heater is a 50-gallon gas-fired rental unit that is 11 years old.

**Condition:** Water pressure is typical for the neighbourhood, but drops noticeably with more than one fixture flowing. This is likely due to the smaller diameter pipe coming into the house. City assistance is likely available to help pay for upgrading the main water supply pipe from the street to the house (for more pressure). More information is available at [http://www.toronto.ca/water/supply/water\\_pressure/pressure.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/water/supply/water_pressure/pressure.htm). Typical cost to the homeowner is about \$800 and there is a long waiting list.

Plumbing within the house is in generally good repair. Minor leakage was noted from the coupling just upstream of the main water shutoff valve at the southwest corner of the basement. May want to wait until the incoming service pipe is updated to repair it.

### **Interior:**

-Interior finishes are in good overall condition. Older plaster is cracked in areas – cosmetic item. Possible old water damage was noted at the northeast master bedroom ceiling – monitor, but likely from the former roof leaking.

-The party wall between the two semis is wood frame and likely uninsulated. There is a lot of noise transmission between the two homes. It would be a good idea to visit the home when there are noise sources next door to determine if sound transmission levels are acceptable. Plaster on the common wall could be removed and sound insulation added, but this would be an expensive undertaking. Basement openings between joists actually continue into the neighbour's basement in some cases. These should be sealed.

-Most of the windows have been updated (with the exception of the front entrance area).

-The gaps between the spindles of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor railing are wider than current child safety standards – make temporary improvements as necessary.

-The house has had some damproofing work done from the outside – this is particularly visible at the northeast corner. Overall, it seems to be dryer in the basement than most houses this age. Eavestroughs and downspouts should be kept well maintained to help prevent problems in future.

### **Notes:**

This is a detailed summary of the inspection report for 144 Simpson Avenue, Toronto – performed on October 19, 2004. A few minor additional details/inspection procedures and limitations can be found in the HOME REFERENCE BOOK report (#334832C) for this property. For the purposes of this report, the front door of the house is considered to be facing south.

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 \$100.