

52 Windsor Avenue, Toronto

Inspection Report

May 11, 2018



COMPANY INFORMATION

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

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Overall Condition:

This is a solidly built brick century home that has had a number of renovations and mechanical updates over the past 15 years. Some older systems are coming due for updating, but the house is considered to be in typical to good overall condition compared to similar homes in the area.

Roofing, Flashings and Chimneys:

The roof is comprised of a number of different slopes and surfaces. The main front peaked roof has the original 100⁺-year-old slates on the front slope and asphalt shingles on the rear-facing slope. Several loose/missing/damaged slates were noted at the front and we feel that the slates have reached the end of their life. The asphalt shingles are also older so both slopes should be stripped and resingled within the next year. A very ballpark figure would be roughly \$5,000 but consult several roofers for quotations as roof pricing is well known for being highly variable.

The upper "flat" roof actually has a decent drainage slope and is surfaced with a 2-ply modified bitumen membrane. The membrane is older and some of the seams have been patched. The surface is very uneven. We suspect that there are several roof layers beneath. Nonetheless, it is felt that there are likely a few years of remaining life. In fact, the roof layers underneath provide a certain degree of additional protection from leakage. When the roof ultimately needs to be resurfaced, it should be stripped right down to the roof boards.

The front porch and rear addition roof shingles are past middle-age, but still have several years of remaining life. Neither roof though, has a metal flashing where the roof meets the brick wall of the house. In both cases, the gap was sealed with roofing cement many years ago, but the sealant has cracked. Considering the age of these shingles, it may be preferable to make temporary repairs for the meantime and wait for the next resingling before installing proper metal flashings. Consult with the roofer that will be replacing the upper roof shingles. The lower edge of the front porch shingles is curled up – make localized modifications if water fails to drain properly.

The small metal roof on the dining room oriel window is easily surfaced over with a piece of modified bitumen membrane if any leakage issues develop.

The masonry chimney is no longer used as the water heater and furnace vent directly outside. The chimney bricks at the south gable are in poor shape below the roof line. Serious consideration should be given to removing the chimney (above the roof line and patching the roof gap) when resingling the upper peak. That maintenance issue would then be eliminated. When getting roof quotes, check for the additional cost of removing the chimney. Removing the chimney also eliminates a flashing job and reduces the number of potential water penetration points.

Minor Deficiencies:

-There are some exposed nailheads at the lower rear extension roof shingles that need to be renailed and sealed with roofing cement or caulking.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

-Roof inspected with binoculars and by ladder at the edge of the upper flat roof.

Exterior:

The exterior brickwork is in reasonably good overall repair for its age. Rear wall settlement cracks have been poorly patched with roofing cement (or similar) in the past. In the longer term, these low quality patches would be replaced with proper mortar repairs – not a priority. The rear extension vinyl siding is in good repair.

The aluminum eavestroughing and downspouts are in generally serviceable condition. The rearmost downspout can discharge into a rain barrel or out towards the backyard dependant on which way the downspout lever is turned. Considering how fast a rain barrel can fill up in a heavy rain, you may want to opt for discharge into the backyard.

The front porch floor has been redone as have the steps. The front porch is in good overall condition. The old ceiling is in disrepair. It is understood that the owners are planning to resurface it prior to selling. The front porch roof was noted to be saggy in the middle. Since there is no access, it is impossible to tell if the top of the roof rafters is properly secured to the front brick wall. Monitor for now. If further sagging is noted, it may be necessary to access the porch roof structure from the ceiling below and reinforce the roof rafters from there. This is a labour intensive job with minimal materials cost.

Minor Deficiencies:

- Loose front porch railings should be resecured. You may want to install lattice covers around the perimeter of the front porch (between ground level and the floor support structure) to keep vermin out.
- There is evidence of vermin damage at the north end of the upper front gable (screening has been installed over the hole). The north gable trim has lost its aluminum cover. This too, is to be repaired by the owner.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- Exterior inspection from ground level.
- Sheds are not inspected.

Structure:

The stone foundations support double-brick/masonry exterior walls. The common wall appears to be of solid masonry construction as well. The house appears to be in good structural repair for its age.

The rear single storey extension that houses the main floor bathroom is quite old. Insulation in the crawlspace prevents us from getting a good look at the foundations. It's possible that the foundation is a wood support post/wall structure. It's not very high quality, but has been holding up satisfactorily for decades. There is some evidence of movement of this rear extension relative to the house (bathroom corner crack). It is not known if additional bracing may have been added when the bathroom was installed/renovated. Monitor for now – it is possible that in the long term, an additional bracing wall may have to be constructed in the crawlspace.

The basement floor has been lowered in the past. There is no evidence of any structural issues related to this work.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- The old attic access hatch is very undersized by Code standards and is in a confined closet location. The only option for viewing was to take photos from the hatch, but this method has its limitations.
- There is no access to the flat roof space.
- The crawlspace under the main floor bathroom was examined from its south access hatch.
- Walls were spotchecked only.
- 40% of the foundation wall area was not visible due to finishes at the front basement bedroom.

Electrical:

The house has a 100-amp service with a primary circuit breaker panel and a sub-panel (also with circuit breakers). This is a typical and adequate service size. The visible wiring is updated grounded copper. The original wiring appears to have been entirely replaced or deactivated. Although its absence cannot be guaranteed, no *active* knob-and-tube wiring was visible or found during spotchecks of various outlet and switch boxes. All lights and outlets tested were found to be operable.

Minor Deficiencies:

- The 2nd floor bathroom outlet should be fitted with a GFCI safety receptacle – parts cost is less than \$30.
- The front hall outlet has reversed polarity. It is a simple repair for an electrician to switch the black and white wires at the outlet.
- The old 2-prong outlet in the front 2nd floor bedroom is dead – this is a good thing as it is probably connected to old wiring.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- Concealed electrical components cannot be inspected.
- Main disconnect breaker was not directly accessed nor operated, but the primary deadfront cover was removed to check the breakers and wires.

Heating:

The house is heated by an 80,000 BTU/hr high-efficiency forced air gas furnace that was manufactured 20 years ago. Typical total life expectancy is 15 to 20 years – statistically speaking. The furnace was found to be operable at the time of the inspection. Continue to use this furnace until it fails, but budget roughly \$5,000 to \$6,000 for its eventual replacement – timing unpredictable.

Some rust was visible in the furnace cabinet below the induction fan and exhaust flue. It is common to get occasional condensate fitting leaks with high efficiency furnaces. Monitor and get a service call if necessary.

The rear main floor bathroom was initially built with in-floor electric radiant heating. Unfortunately, the heating mat was accidentally damaged during some plumbing work and is now inoperable. The ceramic floor can be anticipated to be cold in winter. In fact, this bathroom has so much outside wall, ceiling and floor surface that the room will likely be cool/cold when outside temperatures are low. Look into adding a larger electric heater if this is the case. The heating duct leading to this bathroom needs insulation in the crawlspace. In general, the insulation in the crawlspace has seen some damage due to vermin. We noted some rat droppings in the crawlspace. They seem to be entering underneath the siding near the outside access hatch. Have a pest control specialist in to seal up any potential access points. Add insulation in the crawlspace where necessary and ensure that the pipes are monitored for freezing in cold weather. It may be necessary to install heating cables on supply pipes in the area if this is a problem.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- Heat exchangers not visible.
- Safety devices not tested.
- Heat gain/heat loss calculations not done
- 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.

Air Conditioning:

Cooling is provided by a central A/C system that is rated at 30,000 BTU/hr. The unit is 10 years old. Typical total life expectancy is closer to 15 years. The air conditioning could not be tested

due to cold outside air temperatures (running the A/C when the temperature is below 16°C can damage the compressor). It is also still covered for winter.

As is typical for an older home, the number and size of ducts leading to the 2nd floor is limited and there is no air return on the upper level. Cooling efficiency is correspondingly reduced. Closing off registers on the lower levels in the summer can be helpful, but it is likely that the 2nd floor will be warmer than the first floor and basement on hot days. Considering our very short cooling season, improvement to the ductwork would typically not be cost-effective.

Insulation:

The small front attic represents only about 1/3 of the overall roof space. Cellulose insulation has been added to the front attic and it appears to be about R-20 to R-24 up there. Current insulation standards call for R-50, but considering that insulation can't easily be upgraded to the other 2/3rds of the roof, it doesn't seem cost-effective to add more front attic insulation. The access door could be better sealed and insulated though.

The solid masonry walls were originally built without insulation and with no space to add more insulation. This is typical for the era. Since adding more insulation is not easily done, it is best to concentrate on reducing air infiltration through lower cost caulking/sealing and weatherstripping improvements as much as possible. It is possible that some above-grade walls had insulation added during renovations – e.g. kitchen, main floor bathroom, etc.

The front basement bedroom walls were found to be insulated with mineral wool. The insulation is spaced away from the foundations. The benefit of this is that the drywall and insulation tends to stay dryer. The downside is that there can be a lot of drafts and air circulation on the cold side of the insulation that can manage to get into the rear basement. The rear basement walls are uninsulated. Add insulation (and a moisture barrier) if finishing the rear basement – see the "interior" section.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- The old attic access hatch is very undersized by Code standards and is in a confined closet location. The only option for viewing was to take photos from the hatch, but this method has its limitations.
- There is no access to the flat roof space.
- Continuity of air/vapour barrier not verified.
- 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 supply pipe is located below the bed in the basement bedroom and the flooring is set up in such a way that the pipe itself is not very accessible. The type of fitting used at floor level and the fact that water pressure tends to drop noticeably with more than one fixture flowing simultaneously suggests that the incoming supply pipe may be lead. There may be City assistance available for upgrading the main water supply pipe (for more pressure and to eliminate any lead piping that might be present). More information is available at: www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/tap-water-in-toronto/lead-drinking-water/priority-lead-water-service-replacement-program. There is typically a long waiting list. There are also quotas in place that could affect assistance availability. Cost to the homeowner is usually in the \$2,500 to \$3,500 range.

The visible supply piping *within* the house is a combination of copper and PEX plastic (not KITEC).

The visible waste plumbing is primarily ABS plastic with some cast iron. Cast iron waste plumbing is currently an issue for some insurance companies (although their prejudice is not considered to be warranted in our opinion). There are still a number of insurance companies without this particular bias.

The rental water heater is a 189-litre power-vented gas unit that was manufactured 8 years ago. Typical life expectancy is closer to 15 years in total.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

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

Interior:

- The interior wall and ceiling finishes are original plaster in most locations. As such, they show typical cracks and other imperfections (especially in areas that see less use – like closets).
- As with most century homes, the floors do tend to slope towards the middle of the house. Unless major renovations are planned, this is usually not cost-effective to repair.
- The windows are different ages and in different states of repair in different areas of the house. They range from original (with storm) in the living room to roughly 20 years old in many areas to quite new in the front 2nd floor bedroom. Some of the windows need screen repairs. We recommend replacing any older windows on an as-needed basis if they are found to be drafty – typically \$80 and up per square foot.
- The living room/dining room pocket doors will need some adjustment in order to operate properly.
- The front basement bedroom walls were found to be dry at the time of the inspection (both visually and when tested with a moisture meter). This is not surprising considering that the east side of the house is protected by the porch, the north side is common with the neighbour and the south wall of the basement bedroom has good clearance from the foundations. Some efflorescence, dampness and peeling paint was visible on exposed foundations in the rear basement. This is basically inevitable with older foundations over time. The house was built long before the invention of modern waterproofing and perimeter drainage systems, so the foundations are not "waterproof". Some dampness in an unfinished basement area is not much of a concern, but if the rear basement is ever renovated, we would recommend installing a watertight, drainage membrane such as [Delta MS](#) on the *interior* foundations prior to framing, insulating and drywalling. This would lead to perimeter drainage tiles at floor level and ultimately to a sump pump or the floor drain. Basement dampness can be minimized in all homes by keeping eavestroughs and downspouts well maintained and preventing surface water accumulations near the house by promoting good drainage next to the foundations through good grading. It is also a good idea to run a dehumidifier in the basement in the summer time.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- No comment made on cosmetic aspects of interior finishes.
- CO/smoke detectors and appliances not inspected. We recommend that there be one smoke detector and one carbon monoxide detector on each level of every home. Although appliances are not inspected, we did note that the dryer exhaust duct is plastic and this could be a fire hazard – replace with metal.
- Drainage tile (if any) not visible.
- No comment can be offered on the acoustical properties of the common wall.
- 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 and the inspection standards.

Notes:

This is the inspection report for 52 Windsor Avenue, Toronto – performed on May 11, 2018. For the purposes of this report, the front of the house is considered to be facing east. 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.

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.