

## Stephen Kelk, Certified Master Inspector, monitors house sales

By Constance Scrafield

"This means buying and selling," said Stephen Kelk, on route to his first appointment of the day, "generally helping buyers learn about the home they go to purchase, looking to the defects in the house. It's more of a third party evaluation of the house."

However, he added that it's tricky to recommend contractors, "even if I have experience with them, but it's the same with real estates. If they recommend a contractor and something goes wrong...?"

He said, "I'd rather let people read reviews. There are some great companies in town."

He has a background in construction. "I ran a small construction company before, which led me into inspections, and I want to be able to offer a service. I work mostly in Orangeville, Dufferin County but not the city, not Brampton. I think I've been doing the home inspections for six years."

"I like being able to help people, meeting new people; there's always something different, a challenge; I'm looking for a lot of things in home inspections."

Indeed, the list of items to consider is long and Mr. Kelk's website is full of information and words of caution with reference to the many points that one might well miss: the security of wood burning appliances, testing and sampling for mold and indoor air quality, testing for traces of asbestos, looking to be sure your home's air is as clean as it can be.

"Sometimes, it's like solving a puzzle. A lot of time, owners don't know about things but this is a non-invasive home inspection. We don't move furniture or anything like that? it would take days for that kind of inspection."

"I'd say defects exist for sure; there is not a perfect house. There are always things. Generally, we do find things that surprise the owner, of things not necessarily hindering the way life goes on. A lot of the time, people wouldn't be aware of them. A lot of things are just maintenance items."

His analogy: "Like a car, if it stops running you have to go to a mechanic but, with a house, you don't notice it and life goes on."

When purchasing a house, Mr. Kelk did say, "Houses don't have to have inspections but it is definitely a good idea. I like the client being with me during an inspection; they have a lot to gain from this learning experience. How to pay attention, especially with a country house. It's usually just a list of maintenance stuff but, at least, you've got that list."

Noting the wisdom of attending to "maintenance and not doing things that you're not skilled to do." He said, laughingly, "There's a video for everything on YouTube and if you do it yourself, it's a learning curve. You might mess it up the first time but, after ten times, you can learn how to do a thing."

Talking about development in the area, his comment was, "I think things are pretty good about people working. I think contractors are busy. With me, it's just myself with this company: I'm the company; I'm the guy. Right now, I like to keep it simple. Just myself. I kind-of follow the flow of real estate."

For someone wanting to be in the business, Mr. Kelk recommended, "Have a business background. As many contractors know, half is running the business. If you don't know how to run a business, you could have problems. This is not something you can just pick up. Reading a book and doing the job are different things. There's no substitute for experience."

His ambition admits that he is in a good place. "I think, at this point, I like keeping it simple. Just me and staying more local. I like it

the way it is. I'm married with children. So, time is more valuable than anything with two children, a five month old and a four year old.?

Along those lines, ?I prefer not to work on the weekends. If a referral came from the internet, it would be difficult to turn anything down. Real estate agents and us, we have to work with the time people have. A lot of the time, it's being available with customers but we can say ?these are my hours.'

?The other thing is figuring out how to spend your advertising dollars; I would say a lot of it is word of mouth and references, reputation and online. I have good references, I sponsor things sometimes, small things, donate prizes - things like that but online seems to be the biggest thing.?

Realistically, ?It's being honest, trying to do the best job you can and eventually, the word gets around and the phones rings.?

Speaking generally about real estate in town, he remarked, ?Real estate in Orangeville, it seems to be fairly busy right now. The market seems strong and prices will continue to go up. It's very smart to be in the real estate; it's a market for a young person.

?The new houses are always good new; everything seems to sell right away. I try to keep up with current information.

?Our cottage has solar panels, LED lights. The main things we've learned is you have to use less energy. It's the only way to do it.?

He reflected, as he pulled into his appointment, ?I think that I've done good job in the past; I'm well informed, To use me, I think there's good options out there. I there to look after the client. I'm there to teach you about the house and give you the best chance to buy the house you will love.?