



• CUSTOM HOMES / DESIGN-BUILD •

# BUILDING SMARTER

## Managing the environment of your new custom home

Years ago, when you had a home built, the final act was an exchange between you and the builder – you handed over the cheque in exchange for the keys, and away you both went.

When it comes to custom homes, though, those days are long gone. Nowadays, your builder should stay involved for some time after you move in, in part to help you and your house get to know each other.

“Houses are no longer just beautiful boxes with roofs,” says Matt Pryce. “A modern house is almost a living organism, one that responds to you. We design and build to suit your needs, and then we stay involved after construction is complete to ensure that your relationship with your new home goes smoothly.”

Matt and his brother Steve Pryce are the founders and owners of Prycon Custom Building & Renovations. For 28 years they and their team have been designing and building high-end custom homes throughout Barrie and Simcoe County.

Describing a house as a living organism isn’t that far from the truth. The circulatory system (plumbing) and the

lungs (the HVAC system) used to be essentially separate systems that worked independently. These days, every part of the house needs to work in tandem, all of it controlled by artificial intelligence (the “brains”) so that it can respond and even learn to adapt to your behaviour.

“People sometimes ask ‘when did my house get smarter

than me,’” Steve says with a laugh. “They mean it as a joke, but it’s not far from the truth.”

In fact, he says, post-construction problems in a modern house – which are exceedingly rare – are almost always caused by humans trying to override the house. “People will say ‘there’s cracks in the baseboards,’ but it turns out the cracks

are there because they let the humidity drop to eight percent and the house is designed to stay at 40 percent.”

**The indoor environment** Controlling humidity, air quality and temperature are key functions of a well-built modern home. Homes are so well sealed and insulated that the indoor environment is essentially a self-contained ecosystem, Matt explains. “Industry is always developing more energy efficient products, and building standards are constantly moving toward greater efficiency. It’s good for the environment and helps homeowners save money on energy costs, but it means the house needs to be managed more precisely.”

That’s particularly true in the first year or two after construction. “We used to



Modern custom homes like this aren’t just gorgeous, they’re also intelligent, with complex systems designed to run every aspect of the home.



*“We will design the house to be flexible and to adapt to anything.”*

say that the house ‘settled’ for the first year, but that’s not accurate,” Steve says. “What’s happening is that all of the building materials are drying out.”

Everything dries, shrinks, or hardens at different rates, and some components of the house don’t change at all. “Managing the process starts with a team of professionals who don’t just know how to build, they understand exactly how the various components will interact after the job is done,” says Matt.

“Our team is constantly upgrading and training, to ensure that we are aware of the latest technologies and

fully understand how all of these complex components and processes interact with each other.”

**Designed with purpose**

A great custom home begins with extensive design consultations, including talks about how the homeowner will use the space when it’s completed.

While some of those conversations relate to aesthetics and floor layout, there’s also a focus on designing the various complex house-management systems.

“Is the house a seasonal residence that will be empty for

months on end, or is it a full-time residence with people in it every day having showers and cooking and generating lots of moisture?” says Steve.

“Ultimately we will design the house to be flexible and to adapt to anything, but it’s important to know how it will be used initially.”

Most innovations in home design and construction techniques have made building more complex (although not all of them have – the growth of wireless technology has dramatically reduced the need to prewire for equipment controls.) But while builders need to continually upgrade

and train, homeowners see the benefit of simplicity.

“When you move in, we will assign someone to come and set up the various systems, and show you how to adjust them. You just let the house take care of the rest.”

“We will keep checking in to ensure that everything is going as it should. But really, it’s about you just enjoying your beautiful new home without having to think about it.”

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