



the Benson Report

Compliments of Cort & Elaine Benson

RE/MAX All Points Realty



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Greetings! You're receiving this newsletter with hopes that you find it informative and entertaining.

If you're thinking of making a move, or are just curious as to real estate trends in your area, please feel free to call at any time. It's always good to hear from you!

All the best,

Cort & Elaine Benson
for

"Twice the Service"



Weathering Our "Hot and Cold" Market



Can the weather influence home sales? Here in Canada, where a great many of us tend to hibernate during the coldest months, we do notice that home resales across Canada usually go into a deep-freeze in January. This year, however, an unexpected mild snap resulted in an all-time monthly sales record being set in January, as warmer than normal temperatures helped to bring out home buyers. Of course, this being Canada, February's winter storms roared back in throughout parts of the country to cool down regular real estate action and postpone transaction closings, but things are expected to be back to normal now for the annual "Spring Rush".

The Canadian Real Estate Association confirmed that the price of homes is heating up, with the average price of a home in Canada now approaching \$300,000. That's up 11.2 percent

from January 2006, thanks largely to frenzied home buying in oil-rich Western Canada, where increases were as high as 58 percent.

We are currently in the midst of the "official" busy buying and selling period throughout most of North America, a period that spans from April to July. With the weather at its best, the school year coming to an end and vacation time looming, there is more housing inventory, and, therefore, more choice for buyers and more interest for sellers, now than at any other time of the year.

By summer's end, families who are anxious to sell and move before the school year starts may provide a small window of leverage for buyers, while sellers between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day are often motivated to accept an offer in order to avoid any disruption in their holiday plans.



If you're looking to jump into today's "hot" real estate market, please call me to take advantage of spring's favourable buying and selling opportunities.

CNSF

Healthier Home Décor

How you decorate and maintain your home can have as much impact on your health as it does on the look of your home. Luckily, creating a healthier home décor doesn't have to be costly or difficult – just consider these simple suggestions.



PLANT PURITY

Besides providing the finishing touch that makes a house a home, plants purify the air you breathe of toxins like ammonia, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide, benzene and more. Other studies indicate that houseplants can reduce headaches, fatigue, stress and colds, thanks to their process of ingesting airborne pollutants and expelling fresh oxygen.

Any houseplant will help purify your air, though some, like spider plants, ivy, ferns and dracaenas, are particularly effective. To maximize their healthful benefits, allot one plant for about every 100 square feet – and remember, the healthier the plant, the more effective.



BRIGHT IDEA

Sunlight is our main source of Vitamin D, essential for healthy bones and immune systems. It also increases serotonin, a mood-elevating chemical, and boosts our oxygen levels, which heightens energy and mental alertness. With most of us spending about 90 percent of our time indoors, however, we don't get nearly enough sunlight.

To maximize sunlight's effects, choose window coverings that allow as much light in as possible – but can be easily adjusted to block light as needed – such as drapes, roller shades or cellular shades. Consider buying full-spectrum lightbulbs and lamps, the artificial equivalent to sunlight; they're relatively inexpensive, last longer and use less energy.



KEEP IT CLEAN

Cleanliness isn't just about aesthetics. It's about ridding your home of all those tiny organisms and particles that hang in the air you breathe and cling to your belongings, triggering severe and sometimes fatal infections and allergies.

Clean mold and mildew, most common in kitchens and bathrooms, with a non-toxic cleaner, and inhibit future growth by using exhaust fans and dehumidifiers in bathrooms and kitchens. Consider replacing commercial cleaners with baking soda, vinegar and other environmentally-friendly alternatives.

Be diligent about vacuuming and dusting up mites and dander. Use a damp cloth on surfaces, knick-knacks and ceiling fans, which spin around allergens every time you run them. Use a HEPA-filtered vacuum on carpets, upholstered furniture and drapes.



GO GREEN

Think carefully about what kind of products you introduce into your décor. Will they contribute to or detract from a healthier home environment for you and your family? Thankfully, there's never been so many choices when it comes to non-toxic alternatives for those products we use at home everyday.

For example, make a healthier choice of interior paints and finishes by applying ones with low VOC (volatile organic compounds) content; anyone with allergies or chemical sensitivities will appreciate their use. Consider organic cotton sheets instead of synthetic or "wrinkle-free" ones that have been chemically treated, usually with formaldehyde, exposure to which can cause rashes, respiratory problems and insomnia.



Lingering Thoughts

A property that lingers on the market longer than is typical isn't necessarily inherently flawed. There are several reasons why perfectly good homes don't sell. Below are a few of the most common.

Undoubtedly, overpricing is the primary reason why homes remain on the market longer than they need to. An inflated price gives buyers the impression the seller isn't serious about selling or willing to negotiate, discouraging buyers from even making an offer. Overpricing also rules out buyers who would have qualified for financing at a lower price.

A property might be in a good location, be well constructed and meet a buyer's needs, but if it doesn't perform well during showings it's bound to stay on the market longer than necessary. Few things turn prospective buyers off faster than arriving for a showing and finding a home that smells bad, is messy or dirty, has outdated components and finishes, needs a lot of repairs, or even presents safety hazards.

Homes for sale by the owner also tend to linger on the market. The reason often has nothing to do with the property itself and everything to do with the fact many do-it-yourself sellers underestimate the cost and effort required to market their property, meaning fewer buyers are even aware of it. When offers do come, many sellers lack the negotiating skills or legal or financial knowledge needed to seal the deal.

Lastly, a property won't speedily sell if it can't easily be shown. The more accessible a seller makes their home, the more it will be shown to potential buyers; the more showings, the greater the likelihood of a sale.



Kids on the Move

In the excitement and stress of buying a new home, the needs of the children affected by the move are sometimes overlooked. To make the process easier on your children – and on yourself – consider the following advice.

Tell your children about your impending move as soon as possible; the more time they have to get used to the idea, the better they'll be able to cope with it. Clearly communicate to them the reasons behind your decision to move and how it will benefit the family.



During the early stages of the home-hunting process, leave your children behind. You and your agent should be distraction-free when making such an important decision, and you don't want to leave sellers with a bad impression should an accident occur. Once your search narrows to homes you're serious about, bring the kids along; they'll appreciate being involved in the process, and older children can provide valuable input.

Your new home chosen, ease the transition for your children by acquainting them with their new neighborhood. Visit your new home, their new school, and local playgrounds, recreational facilities, malls, conservation areas and whatever else might be of interest to your children to get them excited about their new location. If you can't take your kids to see these things first-hand, take pictures for them.

Keep meal, nap and bedtimes the same throughout the move, set up the kids' new rooms as similarly as possible to their old rooms and plan for them to continue current after-school activities (clubs, classes, teams, etc.) in your new neighborhood. A consistent routine makes moving less stressful for children.

Tools of the Trade

With the right equipment, maintaining a beautiful garden is much easier and more enjoyable. Below is a list of essential tools every budding greenthumb should have in their shed:

- n A shovel, with its blade at an angle to its handle, is useful for scooping soil, spreading compost and digging holes for trees and shrubs. Its handle should stand tall to your shoulder and its blade should be forged metal.
- n Spades are distinguished from shovels by a straight blade, parallel to the handle. They're meant for digging and cutting through roots and matted undergrowth. Look for forged metal, which is sturdier for digging.
- n A trowel is essential for working flowerbeds: weeding, transplanting seedlings, planting, overturning and leveling soil. They're weakest where head meets handle; look for a one-piece, forged-metal construction.
- n You'll need pruners to remove dead or diseased plant parts, shape plants and trim overgrowth, which makes for healthier plants. A quality pair has blades that can be replaced or sharpened, ensuring cleaner cuts.
- n A fan rake, preferably with metal tines, keeps your garden clear of leaves, twigs and other debris. A flat-head rake comes in handy for smoothing out beds, breaking up soil clumps and preparing new lawns for seeding.
- n Garden forks work best for loosening soil and mixing in compost, but can also be used for digging. Choose a forged metal fork that's long enough to prevent you from having to stoop over it.
- n A hoe quickens and eases weeding and cultivating soil. Yours should have a handle long enough to prevent you from having to bend over a lot. Avoid stamped-metal hoes – they'll need replacing sooner.



Terminology Tip

Pre-approval - While the pre-qualification process establishes an amount a borrower may qualify to borrow based on information that the borrower provides, pre-approval is a more formal process. This second process involves lenders closely examining your financial status (for example, checking your credit report and verifying your income, employment history and assets), in order to determine whether you qualify for a loan. Once pre-approved, you will know the maximum amount you'll be eligible to borrow, allowing you to home-hunt with confidence in your purchasing power.

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From the desks of Cort & Elaine Benson

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VIEW!



Brand new, no GST
54 Spruce

124 Aspenwood



Showhome condition
\$778,000

Clearview



\$583,000. Over \$120,000
spent on reno's

43 Wilkes



Custom finishing with
greenbelt setting