



According to Royal LePage Realty, single Canadian women now play a significant role in the housing market:

- *Over 51% of new homebuyers are women*
- *Currently, 30% of single, never-before married women own their own home, while 45% of divorced or separated women, and 64% of widowed women are homeowners*
- *25% of women searching for a home are looking for a 'fixer-upper' and plan to do the work themselves*

Deciding to buy some form of real estate is one of the biggest investments most of us will make in our lifetime. Whether you are looking for a house or a condo, determining whether to buy is not just a financial decision, but has to take into account your lifestyle wants and needs. There are many types of home ownership today. Some of us want the white picket fence with plenty of yard space, while others want the maintenance-free living that comes

with a condominium. Some purchasers are opting to “nest” during the week in the city where they work and buy a weekend retreat out of town. This is especially true in large urban centres where housing prices have spiralled to all time highs and commuting distances to more affordable housing is costly and time-consuming.

When you make the decision to purchase your own home there are some important points to consider that will help you make an informed choice that will benefit you in both the short and long term. Below are some things to consider:

### HOME-BUYING TIPS

#### **Choose a community that fits with your life style.**

Decide what's important to you. Things like access to public transportation, proximity of schools, shopping, cultural facilities or recreational centres. Will you be able to find a doctor or are there walk-in clinics within your immediate area? Do you want to rely on your car or would you prefer to be able to walk to stores or restaurants? Once you decide what you want, check out what is available in your price range in a few communities and be aware that you might have to make some compromises.

#### **Get your mortgage pre-approved.**

Before you walk into that open house or look at builder's plans, you need to know how big a mortgage you qualify for. Also take into account all household expenses or condominium fees. Taxes, especially in the GTA can be expensive and utility bills are rising every year. Be comfortable with your maximum mortgage amount and leave yourself some wiggle room for unforeseen expenses.

#### **Discuss down payment options.**

Once you've been pre-approved and know the maximum amount of the mortgage you qualify for, you have to figure out which down payment option will work best for you. You can get a CMHC insured mortgage with a down payment as low as 5% but there is an insurance premium that is added to your mortgage principal. You may have the traditional 25% down payment to avoid this extra charge or you may qualify to borrow a portion of the down payment.

If this is your first home purchase, it's a perfect time to get sound financial advice. Comtech has a First Time Home-Buyer's Program that can help you.

#### **Home Buyers' Plan.**

If you're a first time homebuyer or haven't owned a home for 5 years, you may be able to use your RRSPs as part of your down payment. The government's Home Buyers' Plan lets you borrow up to \$25,000 from your RRSPs tax-free and pay it back over 15 years.

### Get a reputable real estate agent.

Looking for homes on the Internet and trying to do it all yourself can be time-consuming and daunting. A lot of the homes on MLS have been there for a while and usually there is a very good reason that they are not selling. If you contact an agent with your “must have” list itemized in order of priority along with your pre-approved mortgage amount, they can do the legwork for you. Many times they are aware of future issues within a specific neighbourhood, like re-zoning or problems with individual homes, like leaky basements or repeated sewer flooding. They can also direct you to areas that have up and coming potential. Deal with a top-notch agent or get a recommendation from family or friends.

### Get a reputable inspector.

Getting the services of a reputable inspection firm is a must. They can see potential problems in the home that you are purchasing, and yes, they inspect condominiums too. We buy our homes because something has clicked for us on an emotional level so having someone look at your potential purchase with a “jaded” eye will be the best money you will ever spend. They will look past the staging (that many sellers now employ) and check that your structure is sound. If they find any problems you will know what they are and how much it will take to fix them; this can provide you with the ability to negotiate a lower purchase price taking these issues into account.

### Additional costs.

Getting together a down payment and negotiating a mortgage are just some of the costs to take into account. There are other fees to consider whether you buy a single dwelling, townhouse or condominium:

- **appraisal fees** – required for mortgage financing
- **inspection fees** – a must have to check out the soundness of your new home
- **property surveys** – if there is not one available, you will be required to get one
- **legal fees** – of course
- **property taxes** – these can be paid by your financial institution in which case the amount required is including in your payment. If you opt to pay them yourself, ensure that you’re setting aside money for them
- **land transfer taxes** – your real estate agent will be able to advise
- **moving costs** – you may be able to do this yourself but unless everything you own fits into a van, even a truck rental must be taken into account
- **utility payments** – ongoing monthly expense
- **insurance premiums** – ongoing expense
- **repay the Home Buyers’ Plan** – ongoing expense

### Express yourself.

If you have home buying story to share with us contact me. The more we know the more empowered we are.

### CONNECTIONS

- [Land Transfer Taxes in Ontario](#)
- [Home for Her](#)
- [Moving Within Ontario](#)
- [Home Buyers’ Plan](#)

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