

Aspiring realtors tested on countless courses

Contract Law, Mortgage Law, Law of Agency, Mortgage Financing and Standards of Business Practice: these are but a small sampling of the courses an aspiring real estate practitioner must complete before being licensed by a provincial governing body to trade in real estate.

These and countless other courses represent the minimum requirements for licensing which are updated regularly to reflect an increasingly sophisticated marketplace and to meet legitimate consumer expectations. Real estate

practitioners must continually update their skills and training to protect the interests of consumers and, by the same token, ensure the ultimate in service.

For instance, Realtors can explain the benefits of pre-qualifying potential buyers for mortgage financing. This lets the purchaser know

precisely the type of home that can be afforded, and assures the seller that an offer to purchase is made by someone who can assume the required financial responsibility.

Most lending institutions, for example, now add the energy costs to the P.I.T. formula (Principal plus

Interests plus Taxes) in establishing a potential buyer's debt service ability. This invariably brings into focus a need for the skills to properly assess the energy efficiency of a home and its potential effect on the transaction; this is an area of mortgage financing where realtors can help.

Energy efficiency: Good seller, great buy!

Since the energy crisis of the early '70s, all sources of energy, whether for transportation, manufacture or personal comfort, have gained particular significance, as witnessed by the ever growing environmental concerns in our society. The inclusion of energy factors as a condition of mortgage financing makes it obvious why housing consumers should pay close attention to the structure and over-all condition of any house.

Through their real estate boards, Realtors have access to consumer information on energy efficiency in a program developed jointly by the Canadian Electrical Association, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada and the Canadian Real

Estate Association. The purpose of this program is to help such consumers identify these energy factors and their impact on the purchase or sale of a home. Simply put, energy expenditures might very well make or break the sale.

From a marketing standpoint, the energy factor is very important to a residential property transaction. It's therefore wise to follow a simple energy checklist with the help of your Realtor, whether you're buying a house, or trying to sell one.

The simplest way to determine the energy efficiency of a home is the feather test: glue a downy feather to a toothpick and run it along window and door frames, wall outlets and exhaust vents, if any. Drafts are the major cause of either heat loss in the winter or heat intake in the summer which, incidentally, are good indicators of a home's energy efficiency. A careful look at the heating system, its type, the degree of insulation (by looking behind a wall outlet, for example), ventilation, the types of doors and windows, the lifestyle of the actual occupants and of course, the energy bills, will all help in determining the energy consumption factor.

In the home buyer and home seller scenario, this simple energy checklist will serve two important purposes: for the potential buyer, it could determine the overall ability to carry the mortgage costs, and for the seller, it could mean doing a few inexpensive renovations and repairs to increase first, the chances of a trouble-free sale and, by extension, the buyer market base which is so important when putting a house up for sale.

This article is supplied by The Canadian Real Estate Association to benefit consumers in the housing market. For more information about the purchase or sale of a home, contact your local real estate board, or get in touch with your neighborhood Realtor.

Budget is a must for financial stability

By FRED DUCK, CA

Today many people face large bills, not because they haven't enough income but because they aren't organized.

Why not resolve to put yourself on a sound financial footing - and start with a budget.

The budget is a calculation of your total monthly income (paycheques, interest and dividends, the family allowance and part-time employment) compared to expenses (including rent or mortgage, utility bills, repairs, phone, cable TV, insurance, transportation, groceries, clothes and child care).

With luck you'll come up with a surplus - and you should use it to pay down any credit card balances because here you are paying the highest interest - in the 20 per cent range. Next pay off bank debt, currently about 15 per cent.

If you are a homeowner, consider making bonus mortgage payments, which save future interest.

If you are not a homeowner, consider becoming one. You would provide yourself not only with a home but a sound investment on which there will be no capital gains tax. Payments, taxes and utilities should not exceed 30 per cent of gross family income.

If you need a car, 1990 may be a good year to buy one. Since the auto industry appears to be in a downturn, the interest rates being offered through the financing arms of the car manufactureres are likely

to be increasingly attractive.

Once your debts are paid, you can map out a short-term and a long-term savings and investment plan.

Short-term savings - through a bank account, 30-day term deposits and other liquid savings - provide for such emergencies as car repairs and the sudden need for a new refrigerator.

Your long-term savings will consist of Registered Retirement Savings Plans (which allow your money to grow on a tax-deferred basis as you save for retirement) and perhaps a Registered Educational Savings Plan (the money is earned tax-free, then becomes taxable to your child when attending college or university).

Investing might include common stocks and mutual funds. As you grow older, concentrate on securities with less risk. Always look for sound investments first, tax savings second.

Get organized now. Not only will you avoid future debt crises, but you will be laying the groundwork for long-term financial security.

For CA's advice on TV - see Your Wealth, available on broadcast channels in Ontario and on satellite across Canada, or see Money in the Bank, on your community cable channel.

Moneycare is general financial advice by Canada's chartered accountants. Fred Duck is with Grossman and Fuhrer.

Summer: a great time for outdoor barbecues

Summer is a great time to entertain and the outdoors is the perfect setting for barbecues and get-togethers. But before you kick off your shoes and head for the sunshine, Regal Greetings and Gifts has a few tips that will make outdoor entertaining a breeze.

Always have an alternative place to hold your gathering in case of summer showers.

Keep food covered from unwanted insects and flies. A large food umbrella that sits on a picnic table or on the ground will protect your food from unwanted visitors. Or, try hanging a wasp trap - a two-piece plastic dish filled with sugar and water - in a nearby tree or fence to attract and trap insects.

Clip plastic weights to your tablecloth and keep the corners from flying up when it gets windy.

A grill mesh on top of the barbecue allows you to cook mouthwatering shrimps, scallops, fingerfoods and fresh vegetables without fear of losing them to the coals.

Shish kebabs with plenty of fresh vegetables, chicken, seafood or beef make great summer meals. Buy extra long shish kebab skewers when planning on a large party to allow for more room on the grill.

Bamboo plate holders are an attractive solution to the problem of unstable and leaky paper plates.

Place citronella candles around your patio to create a special atmosphere - no one has to know the candles are there to repel insects.

Survey completed Wednesday July 11, 1990	MORTGAGE RATES ANNUAL INTEREST					
	SIX MONTH	ONE YEAR	TWO YEAR	THREE YEAR	FOUR YEAR	FIVE YEAR
TRUST COMPANIES						
Canada Trust	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25
Municipal Trust	N/A	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50
CHARTERED BANKS						
Bank of Commerce	N/A	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25
Bank of Montreal	14.25	14.20	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25
Bank of Nova Scotia	N/A	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25
Royal Bank	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25
Toronto Dominion	N/A	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25

This survey was prepared to help the Herald Homestyle readers track weekly Bank and Trust Company rates.

Scientists working to control pests

Scientists at Agriculture Canada in Winnipeg and the National Research Centre (NRC) in Cairo, Egypt, are helping each other develop environmentally-friendly insecticides from a common soil bacterium.

The collaboration, sponsored since 1985 by Canada's International Development Research Centre, seeks to provide soybean, groundnut and canola growers in both countries with safer alternatives to conventional chemical pesticides.

In addition, the international partnership may help Egypt recover some of the \$2- to 3-million it loses every year when exchanging foreign currency reserves for chemicals to protect soybean and groundnut crops.

The bacterium, which may replace such chemicals, is called *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt. Bt degrades quickly in the environment and is harmless to humans, livestock, fish and fowl, says Dr. Oswald Morris of Agriculture Canada's Winnipeg Research Station.

Compared with agrichemicals, Bt is a slow-acting poison, he adds. Its toxicity stems from a protein crystal and dormant spore found within each cell.

Inside a susceptible insect's gut, the crystals split into toxic fragments that tear the gut lining. The spore then germinates, beginning a bacterial population explosion which eventually kills the insect.

Although tiny amounts of Bt prove lethal to some insects, "not all species have the proper gut environment to break the protein crystal down efficiently," says Morris. "For them, you'd have to use huge amounts of Bt."

Another variable affecting Bt's efficacy is the actual strain being used, says Morris. Some strains of Bt, including commercial products for forestry applications, are effective against blackflies and mosquitoes, he explains. Others are more suited to controlling spruce budworm infestations and beetles.

Morris and his NRC colleague, Dr. H. S. Salama, are coordinating a search for Bt strains that work well against butterflies and moths - the natural foes of soybeans and canola. So far, their respective teams have isolated a number of promising strains "which we consider to be significantly more toxic (to crop pests) than the commercial products," Morris says.

In addition to testing their own discoveries, the collaborators are swapping Bt samples. "Egyptian strains may very well be effective against Canadian insects and vice versa," says Morris.

Both research teams are also investigating the prospects of enhancing Bt's toxicity. "We're trying a lot of different approaches," he says. "One way is to grow Bt on different media. Another method is to see if non-toxic additives in our bacterial formulations will make insect guts more sensitive to Bt."

Once perfected, Bt-based products should have long-lived effectiveness and usefulness, says Morris. Because Bt products degrade naturally, insects won't develop resistance to them as quickly as to most chemical pesticides.