

# Preparing for a move requires effective planning

This article is provided by local Realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Preparing for a move is not easy. Whether you're relocating to a house down the street, across town, or to another city, moving is a major undertaking which requires effective planning and organization.

One of the major stumbling blocks to a smooth move is procrastination. If you're like a lot of people, you don't like to pack too much too far in advance in case you might still need to use certain items before you actually move. Although it's frustrating to have to look through boxes to find items you've packed in advance, it's even more frustrating to run around at the last minute frantically pitching things into boxes and bags just as your moving truck pulls into your driveway!

### WHERE TO START

Start preparing as soon as your moving date is confirmed. Make advance appointments for the final reading of your gas meter and other utilities. And don't forget to make arrangements for the utilities at your new home to be hooked up prior to your arrival.

You should also try to book a moving van or truck as soon as possible. Keep in mind that long summer weekends are generally the most popular times of the year to move, and it may be very difficult to book a mover on short notice.

In an effort to save money, many people are opting to handle their moves themselves by renting moving trucks (depending on the number of possessions they have and the distance involved). If you choose this route, make sure that you or someone in your family knows how to operate a truck (some come with automatic transmissions), and read over the rental agreement very carefully to make sure you are adequately insured.

If you plan to hire a moving company to do the job, shop around and compare rates. Some moving companies offer innovative moving packages.

You should also send out change of address cards before your move and make arrangements with the post office to have your mail redirected to your new home, starting on your moving date. If you're moving out of town, make sure you have your children's school transcripts transferred.

### PACKING STRATEGY

Take some time to think about all the things you'll have to pack. It's helpful to make an inventory of all the major items you'll be taking with you, so you have a good idea of what your moving requirements are.

Try to estimate how many boxes you'll need and go to your local supermarket and ask for discarded boxes. Try to get an assortment of different sizes. You may also be able to purchase boxes from stationary stores and truck rental firms. If you have a typical three-bedroom house, you will require between 50 and 60 boxes.

Once you have obtained enough containers to get you started, it's time to get to work. The task may seem overwhelming at first, but you should try to spend at least one hour a day sorting and packing your belongings. You'll be amazed at how quickly you make progress. This type of regimen will also help you weed out items that you want to get rid of, well in advance of your actual moving date.

Make sure you don't throw out items that you think someone else might be able to use. Ask friends or

relatives if they have any use for your old couch, easy chair or clothing - or donate them to a charitable organization. You may also want to hold a garage sale.

### PRIORITIZE

Try to prioritize your packing so that you pack items first that you know you won't need until well after the move. Clothing is a prime example. If you're moving in the fall or winter, pack up your spring and summer clothing first. In addition to using boxes and storage bags, try to use your luggage to pack clothing as well. There's no sense in moving empty suitcases.

It's also a good idea to pack a suitcase for each family member with about one week's worth of seasonal clothes. This will give everyone easy access to clothing during the first few days following the move.

It's best to try and pack items from the same room together, keeping kitchen utensils in the same boxes and bedroom items in similar boxes. Label each box as soon as you're finished. You can also go one step further and list many of the key items in each box (such as a toaster or kettle), so you can easily locate them once you reach your new home.

Try to be innovative in your packing and use household items as packing insulation, where possible. Large fragile or odd-shaped items like lamps can be wrapped in dish towels or towels to protect them. However, very fine breakables should be carefully wrapped and placed in specially marked boxes - you may even want to move these items separately by car to make sure they receive a minimum amount of jostling during the move. And make sure all breakable items are packed in boxes marked "fragile."

Newspaper can also be used as packing insulation. But make sure you don't use it on items that can become easily marked by newsprint (such as cotton lamp shades). Some people prefer to buy large quantities of tissue paper to wrap their figurines and fine crystal. Bubble wrap is also a popular packing material, and you may want to check your local packaging suppliers or your truck rental company to see if you can buy some.

It's also a good idea to make a list of items which should be packed separately and last - like medications. You'll also want to make up a box of basic items needed for settling in such as cleaning supplies, screw drivers, drills, a hammer, flashlight, light bulbs, toiletry items and fuses.

Important papers, like insurance policies, passports, tax receipts, medical and financial papers should be kept separate. You might want to transport these documents separately in your briefcase or a portable file folder. That way, they won't get misplaced.

### LOADING UP

If you are handling your own move, load the heaviest items first, like your fridge, stove, washer, dryer and freezer. Mattresses can be placed along the sides of the truck. Make sure you stack boxes inside the truck according to their weight. Don't put heavy boxes of books on top of your breakables. Moving experts recommend limiting book box weight to about 30 pounds.

Also try to fully utilize all the space in the truck. Stack chairs and cover wooden furniture with old sheets or request special furniture pads from the truck rental company. Pack things in the drawers of your

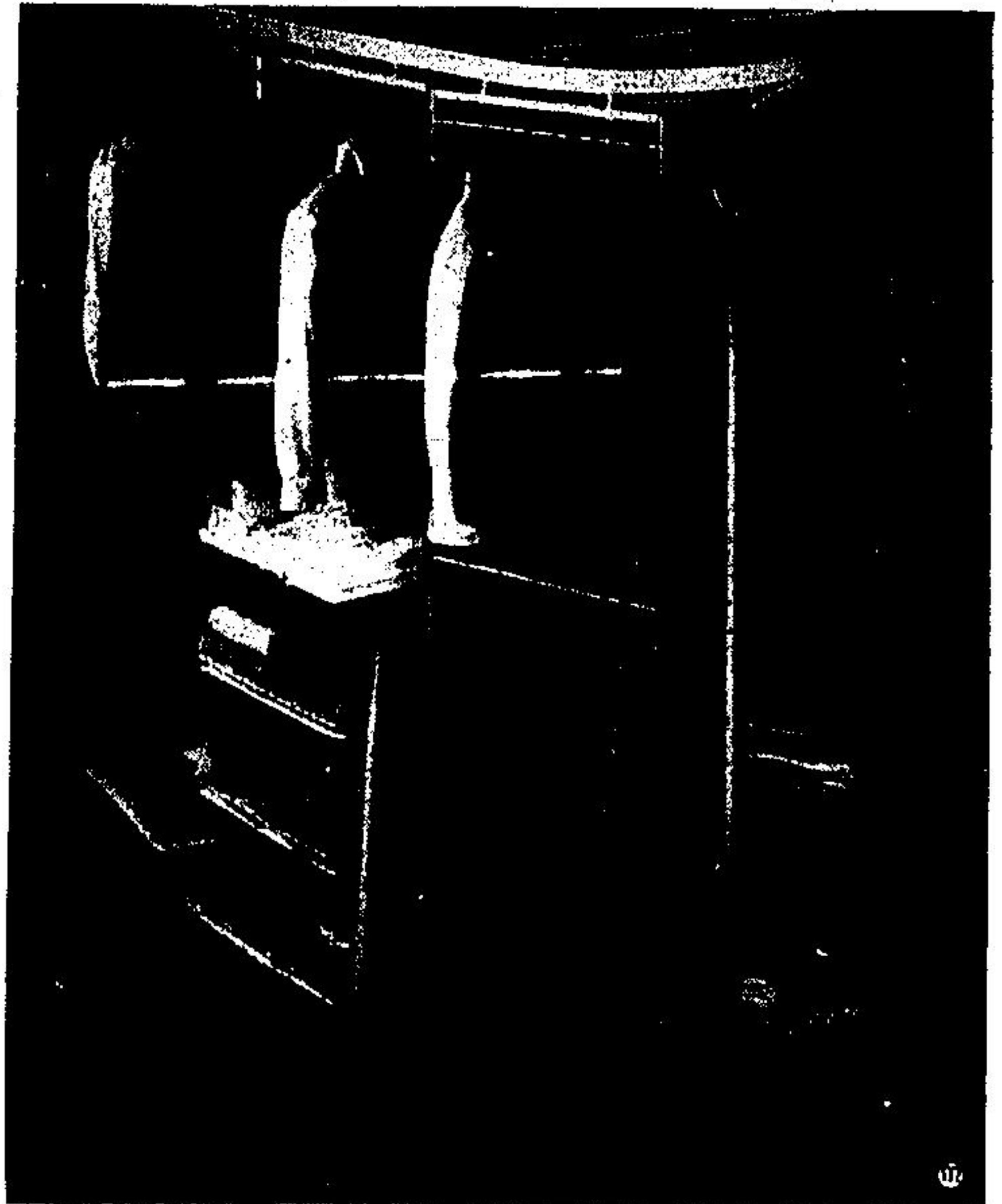
dressers. You can also pack items in your freezer or washing machine. Pictures and mirrors should be carefully wrapped and placed firmly along the sides of the truck or between mattresses, to minimize impact.

When loading furniture, make sure you cover your couch, easy chairs and mattresses with old sheets so they won't get dirty during

the move.

Before leaving your old home, make a final inspection tour to make sure you haven't forgotten anything. Turn off all the lights and close and lock all windows and doors. If you're moving from a rental property, leave your keys with your landlord. If you're moving from your own home, leave your keys with your lawyer.

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## Contracts important

One of the major reasons for disputes over renovation work is the lack of a contract. The best way to avoid this is to draw up an agreement describing the work to be done and what it will cost to do it. This contract becomes a legal document, binding both parties once they have signed it.

According to a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) publication, "How to Hire a Contractor", the contract should include:

- Names and addresses of the buyer (you and the seller (the contractor). Make sure the firm you have been dealing with is the one named on the contract.
- A detailed description with sketches of the work to be done and the materials to be used, including all work being subcontracted, such as plumbing and wiring. This is an area where many misunderstandings occur. It is extremely important to list all job specifications.
- Agreement on who is responsible for obtaining all necessary drawings, job permits, etc.
- Responsibility of the contractor for removing debris as soon as renovations are completed.
- A statement of the contractor's public liability and property damage insurance.
- Firm starting and completion dates.
- Price and terms of payment.

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