



**RESALE
HOMES
COLLECTIONS**

AURORA/KING
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 10

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KEN PRATT

A trusted and knowledgeable Realtor with a proven track record

When he began a career in real estate, Ken Pratt, a Real Estate Agent with Century 21 Heritage Group Ltd., was already very experienced in business, and the transition to the real estate industry was an easy learning curve.

A LICENSED REAL ESTATE AGENT SINCE 2014, Ken had a previous career in the grocery business before owning his own store in Beeton. He took over a grocery store at the request of the owner at that time, who asked him to continue to run the store and help guide many of the staff into retirement.

"I really enjoyed the sales part of the industry," Ken explained. "I took the Canadian Professional Sales Association course and became the first retailer to be allowed to use my experience to join the Association. It is based on bringing ethics and morals into sales."

Along with his experience in business, Ken is also a former Councillor with the former Town of Alliston, a Director and Sunday school teacher with his church, and has developed a strong network of knowledgeable connections through the region.

Ken always had an interest in real estate and has kept informed of the market and the trends over the years. It was this interest in the market that led him to pursue a career in real estate. He had a natural ability to work with people and negotiate deals that created equitable results for both buyers and sellers.

In his first year as a real estate agent, Ken was named a 'Centurion' – an honour awarded by Century 21 to top salespeople at a brokerage.

"To be really good at real estate, you have to be very good with details," Ken explained. "If someone is buying, they want to pay a certain price; if someone

is selling, they also want a certain price. It takes negotiation to get somewhere in the middle. My background in selling means to me that it's all the same - you need the same principles and ethics."

As a realtor, Ken is knowledgeable of the region and the towns he works in. He can guide you to a neighbourhood that has the amenities you want or require.

When purchasing a home, clients are often very interested in schools, restaurants, sports groups, recreation facilities, clubs, and other local organizations near where they are looking to buy. Other clients may be more concerned about having a pharmacy or medical clinic close by.

Ken knows the neighbourhoods and can guide a client to an area where they just might find what they are looking for. He also has the knowledge of what is or will be, happening in a town that may affect a potential buyer's decision to purchase in a particular area.

Everything from a new development to an area that is on a flood plain must be considered when buying a house, and Ken can advise clients on areas where there is unseen potential or something that could negatively affect a buyer in the future.

"When clients are looking for a realtor, they want someone who is honest, knowledgeable, and a true sales professional," Ken said.

Ken strives to meet and exceed these expectations when he is dealing with clients. He enjoys the job and appreciates meeting clients and helping them achieve their home buying or selling goals – and he does it while maintaining his strong conviction in ethical and professional business practices he has always used in his career.

To reach Ken at Century 21 Heritage Group Ltd., you can visit online at www.ken-pratt.c21.ca to view featured properties or call him at the office at 905-936-2121 or on his cell phone at 705-796-6753.

WRITTEN BY Brian Lockhart

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INTERCITY

MARKET UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2023

AURORA	KING
AVERAGE SALES PRICE	AVERAGE SALES PRICE
\$1,277,312	\$2,052,470
AVERAGE 18 DAYS ON MARKET	AVERAGE 35 DAYS ON MARKET
NUMBER OF SALES	NUMBER OF SALES
49	33
151 NEW LISTINGS	95 NEW LISTINGS
SALE TO LIST RATIO	SALE TO LIST RATIO
99%	96%
YEAR OVER YEAR % CHANGE	YEAR OVER YEAR % CHANGE
9.01%	4.05%

*The statistics provided were obtained from the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board's Market Watch September 2023. Summary of Existing Home Transactions for All Home Types September 2023 + Focus on the MLS Home Price Index for Composite for York Region's Aurora and King

We continue to have a shortage of inventory in the market, by historical standards, but more inventory is beginning to trickle in. With the most recent rate hold, we hope to see Buyers continuing to come off the sidelines and engage in the market. Homes that offer many aesthetic renovations and are priced sharply are still demanding market value and selling in an average number of days. Days on market are beginning to increase and we are experiencing a "more normal" real estate cycle. The higher price point homes are moving slower than expected, but still generating a fair volume of interest. In the lower to mid range segment of the market, multiple offer strategies are not always working as intended. We are experiencing a more balanced market and this is a great time for Buyer's to capitalize on second looks, offers with contingencies and more choices when shopping. If you have any questions about current market conditions, we are always here to be a source of value, as your trusted advisor.

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**RESALE
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Embrace the Autumn Advantage: SELLING YOUR HOME IN THE FALL



Selling a home is a significant endeavour, and the season in which you decide to put your property on the market can have a notable impact on your success. While many homeowners opt for the spring and summer months for listing their homes, the fall season holds its own unique charm and benefits for sellers. In this article, we will explore the advantages and considerations when selling your home in the fall.

CURB APPEAL IN FULL COLOR

One of the most striking features of selling your home in the fall is the vibrant foliage and warm colour palette that nature provides. The reds, yellows, and oranges of fall leaves can add a picturesque and inviting atmosphere to your property. Take advantage of this season by raking leaves regularly and keeping your garden well-maintained. Buyers will be captivated by the picturesque view.

LESS COMPETITION

The fall season usually sees fewer homes on the market compared to the spring and summer rush. With less competition, your property can stand out more easily. Buyers may be more focused on the limited available options, giving your home a better chance of being noticed and considered.

SERIOUS BUYERS

While there may be fewer buyers in the fall, the ones who are actively searching are often more

serious about making a purchase. These buyers may be motivated by various factors, such as job relocations, changing family needs, or investments. This means that the showings you receive are more likely to come from genuine, qualified purchasers.

FLEXIBLE CLOSING DATES

Fall homebuyers often have more flexible closing dates. This can be an advantage for sellers who need a quick sale or have specific timeline requirements. Buyers may be motivated to close before the holiday season or in preparation for the new year.

SHOWCASE COZY INTERIORS

As the weather cools down, you can play up the coziness and warmth of your home's interior. Consider staging your home with fall-themed decor, such as warm throws, scented candles, and tasteful seasonal arrangements. A warm, inviting atmosphere can make potential buyers feel right at home.

HIGHLIGHT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

In the fall, buyers tend to be more concerned about energy efficiency as they prepare for the upcoming winter. You can take this opportunity to showcase the energy-saving features of your home, such as well-insulated windows, efficient heating systems, and draft-proof doors. This information can be a strong selling point for environmentally conscious buyers.

THINKING OF SELLING THIS WINTER?

If you are planning on selling your home this winter, consider having your exterior photos taken now! By taking exterior photos in the fall, you can showcase your home in a state of readiness for the impending winter. This can include well-maintained gardens, trimmed trees, a clear driveway, and other preparations that make your home look prepared for the challenges of winter. Winter weather can pose challenges for photography, including snow accumulation, overcast skies, and shorter daylight hours. By taking photos in the fall, you can avoid these challenges and present your home in the best light possible. This ensures that your home is showcased at its best, even once the snow hits the ground. Buyers will appreciate being able to view photos of your home through various seasons.

Selling your home in the fall may not be the most popular choice, but it offers unique advantages that can lead to a successful and profitable sale. From the picturesque curb appeal to the presence of serious buyers, the fall season has much to offer sellers. So, don't be deterred by the changing leaves and cooling temperatures. Embrace the autumn advantage and prepare to welcome prospective buyers into your cozy, inviting home.

If you are looking to buy or sell in King and surrounding areas, give our team a call at (416) 433-8316 for a free home estimate, a professional staging consultation or discuss your real estate needs with The Michele Denniston Real Estate Group today.



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How to get your home ready for winter



(NC) As the seasons shift, it's the perfect time to prepare your home for the chilly temperatures ahead. Taking steps to winterize your home now can make a big difference in your comfort and energy bills. Here are some practical tips.

DRAFT PROOFING

Looking for air leaks and drafts is an important first step when it comes to keeping your home cozy and energy efficient. Cold air can seep into your home through gaps around windows, doors and - believe it or not - even electrical outlets. After a thorough inspection, use weatherstripping or caulking to seal any openings. You'll keep warm air in and cold air out, which can save you energy and money.

INSULATION UPGRADES

Think about adding insulation in key areas of your home. Attics, walls and floors are common places

where heat can escape. New or additional insulation can help retain heat and keep indoor temperatures consistent. It's a smart investment that can pay off with lower energy bills and greater comfort.

HVAC INSPECTION

You probably haven't used it for a few months, so don't forget about your heating system. Schedule a professional maintenance check to make sure it's running at its best. Clean or replace filters, check for any problems and make necessary repairs before winter weather strikes. A well-maintained heating system will not only keep you warm, but also save energy by running more efficiently.

WINTER ESSENTIALS

Now is also a good time to stock your home with winter supplies. Make sure you have extra blankets and warm clothing on hand. Plus, emergency supplies like flashlights, batteries, water and non-perishable food. You'll be better prepared for unexpected weather and can have extra peace of mind for the upcoming season.

Remember, preparation is key and the sooner you start, the longer you can save energy. For recommendations on which upgrades to tackle first, and to see what rebates you can qualify for, you can sign up for a home energy assessment. Find out more at enbridgegas.com/herplus.

www.newscanada.com

3 steps to make your home a safer sanctuary

(NC) Your home should be your haven – a place for you to rest, recharge and enjoy your life. But even in the most magazine-perfect home there are a few important steps to take to keep your hideaway healthy.

TEST FOR RADON

Radon is an invisible radioactive gas that can seep up from the ground anywhere in the country. You can't see it or smell it, but long-term exposure to radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, and it increases the existing risk of cancer in those who do smoke. It doesn't matter if you have a newly built home or an old fixer-upper, your radon level could be high.

The only way to know if there is a dangerous level of radon in your home is to test for it using a do-it-yourself kit or by hiring a qualified professional. Health Canada recommends using a long-term test over three months in the fall and winter for the most accurate results. If your level is too high, you should hire a professional to fix it – it's a usually an easy, one-day job costing about as much as a new home appliance.

INSTALL CO ALARMS

Carbon monoxide, known as CO, is another deadly gas that you can't see, taste or smell. It's made by fuel-burning appliances like gas stoves and fireplaces. When installed, maintained and used properly, these appliances are safe. But if there's a malfunction or not enough ventilation, CO can build up to a deadly level. You may become tired and achy and eventually lose consciousness.

Installing CO alarms on every level of your home, especially outside sleeping areas, is the only way to protect yourself from this deadly gas. If an alarm goes off, get everyone out immediately and call emergency services right away. There shouldn't be damage to your home, but you'll need to air out the home and get the source of the buildup fixed before you can return.

REPLACE BATTERIES IN SMOKE DETECTORS

We all have smoke detectors in our homes to alert us in case of a fire, and you might know you are supposed to test them and change the batteries every six months. Put a note on your calendar to remind you when it's time for this important step. You can also consider wiring in your smoke alarms if you ever update your electrical system. Just remember that you'll still need back-up batteries installed in case of a power outage. Or buy ones with a built-in 10-year battery. Depending on the model, detectors must be replaced every five to 10 years.

Even though these safety steps may not be as pretty or satisfying as sprucing up your space with new paint or decor, they are crucial steps to ensure you can rest easily and safely in your home.

Find more information about radon gas at takeaction-onradon.ca.

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*Based on sold units & volume in Aurora from Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2022 from IMS incorporated Statistics

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6 easy hacks to save energy at home

(NC) Saving energy doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. With a few simple upgrades and changes in daily habits, you can make your home more energy efficient and help lower utility bills.

1 EMBRACE NATURAL LIGHT Take advantage of natural light during the day. Open curtains and blinds to let the sunshine in. You won't need to turn on as many lights, plus it will make your home brighter and more inviting. Keep in mind, this can heat up your home on hot days, but the extra heat is a good thing as the weather cools down.

2 LIGHT THE WAY WITH LEDS When you do need to turn on lights, choose energy-efficient LEDs. They use less energy and last significantly longer than traditional incandescent light bulbs. By switching to LEDs, you can reduce both your energy use and the number of bulbs that end up in landfills.

3 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT Save energy without sacrificing comfort. During cooler months, lower your thermostat by a degree or two and put on an extra layer of clothing. In summer, raise the temperature a bit and use fans for added cooling. Also consider a smart thermostat to automatically adjust temperatures based on your schedule.

4 UNPLUG AND POWER DOWN Many electronics and appliances use standby power — also known as phantom power — even when they're turned off. It's a good idea to unplug them when not in use to reduce energy waste. Also think about using power bars with switches to easily turn off multiple devices at one time.

5 SEAL ENERGY LEAKS Are your windows or doors drafty? Use inexpensive weatherstripping and caulking to seal up gaps. This simple step can keep your home better insulated and temperatures more stable. That way, your heating and cooling systems don't have to work as hard to keep your home comfy.

6 TAP INTO LOCAL PROGRAMS Check out programs that help homeowners reduce energy use, such as Home Efficiency Rebate Plus. A partnership between Enbridge Gas and the federal government, it offers rebates for energy-efficient home upgrades, such as insulation, windows, doors and more.

Find more information at enbridgegas.com/herplus.

www.newscanada.com



FALL HOME Decor Trends

The season of pumpkin spice is once again upon us, and so are fall decorating traditions.

For many of us, the transition from summer to fall is a nostalgic time to break out the spooky decor, unpack the turkey-themed table runner and adorn the front door with our favourite fall wreath. But, if dressing up the house with orange pumpkins and burlap year after year is getting a bit stale over time, there's no harm in shaking up your fall decorating choices this season.

Here are four new 2023 fall decor trends you can try in your home:

EARTHY TONES

Fall colours are traditionally defined by shades of orange, red and brown. This year, more earth-like tones are making their way into the home, including varieties of sage green, warm beige and caramel, rustic brick red and earthy terracotta. You can achieve this softer, more muted fall look through coloured glassware, cushion covers, ceramics, blankets and other housewares that are easy to swap out when the seasons

change. If you're looking to add a contrasting statement piece to your interior this fall, try introducing an eye-catching accent colour with a hint of black, indigo or copper.

RUSTIC TOUCHES

Rustic furniture is a staple in fall design this year. Building off of the theme of warm and earth-inspired interiors, distressed or vintage finds will bring a touch of charm to your home this season. The most economical and environmentally friendly way to pull off this look is with the help of your local thrift store or online marketplaces, where you're likely to find an array of second-hand furniture, rugs and trinkets. You don't need to spend a lot to add a ton of character to your space.

LAYERED TEXTURES

As the temperature drops, we tend to layer up with different fabrics to keep our bodies warm – it's no different for our homes.

This fall, mix and match different layers of textures and fabrics for an extra cozy feel. Whether it's your bedding, accent cushions or rugs, get creative with different textiles, such as wool, knit, velvet, satin and cashmere. If your interior tastes are more neutral, you

can still achieve this trend with a monochromatic colour palette to elevate your home.

FRUITS AND FLOWERS

Move aside pumpkins – fruits are all the rage this year taking centre stage in 2023. Arrange apples, figs and pears in dough bowls for a less-expected fall centrepiece. If fruits aren't your thing, opt for dried florals like pampas grass, sunflowers or wheat stalks to add a touch of 'Cottage Core' to your living space.

BONUS TIP: GIVE ATTENTION TO OUTDOOR SPACES

We are using outdoor spaces longer thanks to milder weather and outdoor heaters. Show your balcony, patio or backyard some fall decor love too by dressing it up with lanterns, wreaths and seasonal flowers, such as chrysanthemums or hydrangeas. Add a touch of coziness around your outdoor fireplace or sitting area with water-resistant pillows and blankets in your favourite fall colours and patterns.

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SPOOKY REAL ESTATE: THE HAUNTED HOUSE OF AURORA



By Julien Laurion
The Big Tuna of Real Estate

Aurora, Ontario - As the leaves turn to vibrant shades of orange and the chill of autumn fills the air, we take you on a spine-tingling journey through the haunted history of Aurora. While most might associate the real estate market with property values and square footage, there are tales of one house that transcend the ordinary.

NESTLED AMIDST THE CHARMING streets of Aurora, a historic Victorian mansion stands as a ghostly testament to the town's eerie past. This impressive abode, known as the "Evershadow Estate," has intrigued both ghost enthusiasts and real estate aficionados alike. The property, now listed for sale, comes with a thrilling twist that would make even the bravest buyers pause.

Julien Laurion, known as "The Big Tuna" in the real estate world, is tasked with the spooky honour of selling this house. As he guided me through the cobwebbed corridors and creaky floors, he began to recount the ghostly tales of Evershadow Estate.

"From the moment you enter this haunted house, you'll feel the presence of its otherworldly inhabitants," said The Big Tuna. "It's the ultimate fixer-upper, but the spirits that call it home are the true investment."

As we explored the house, he shared stories of spectral laughter echoing through the halls, and phantom footsteps descending the grand staircase. Brave buyers, be prepared for unexplained drafts and flickering lights and don't be surprised if you find your furniture rearranged when you wake up in the morning. The ghosts have a taste for interior design!

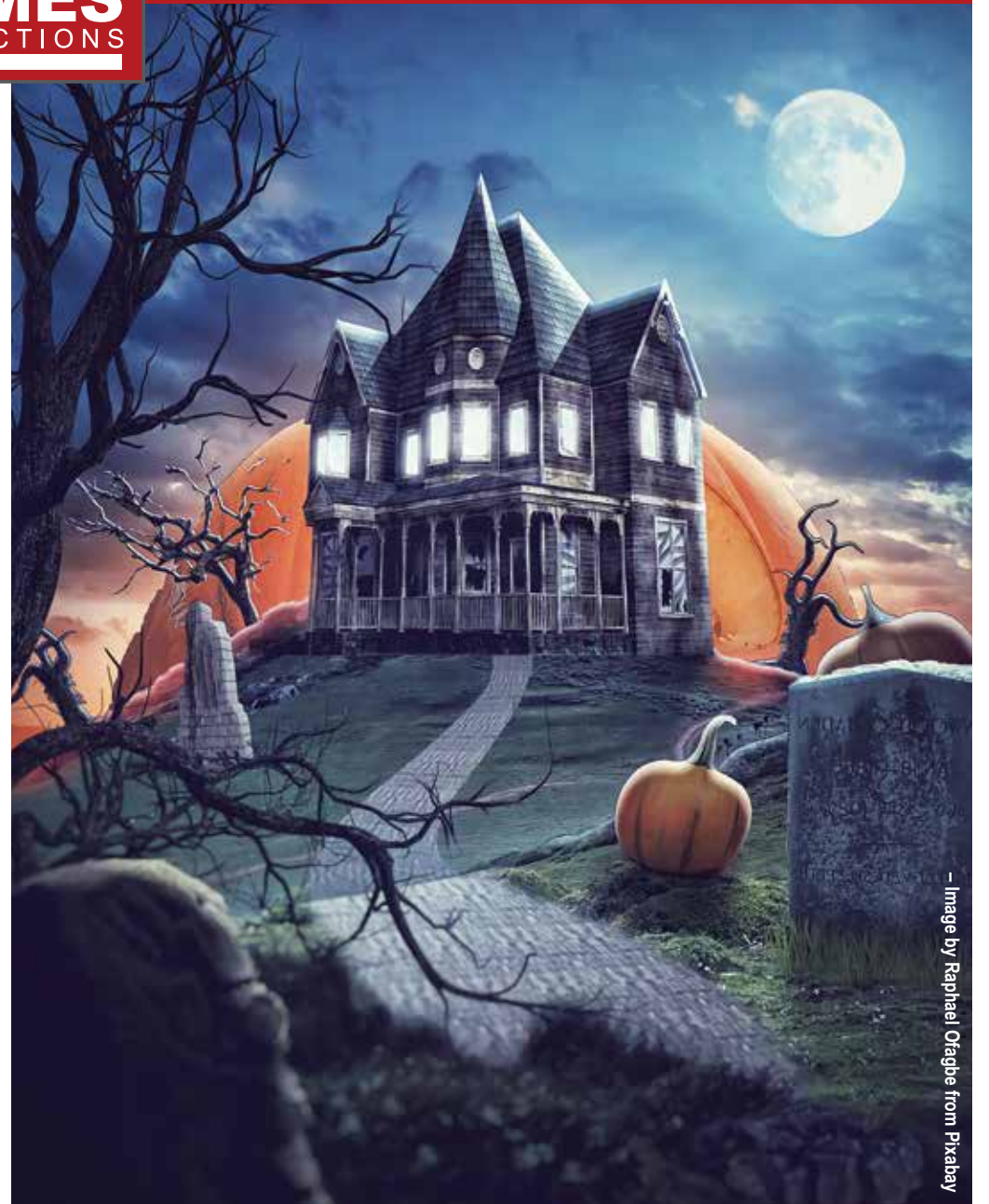
The Big Tuna also introduced me to the tale of Lady Abigail Sinclair, the original owner of Evershadow Estate. Her tragic end involved a forbidden romance, a hidden treasure, and an untimely demise. Locals say she still roams the halls, searching for her lost love and the treasure she was unjustly denied.

The basement, with its ancient stone walls and dimly lit passageways, is rumoured to be the epicentre of paranormal activity. Many visitors have reported ghostly apparitions, and one brave homeowner even claimed to have seen Lady Abigail herself, weeping in the shadows.

But it's not all spooks and chills; Evershadow Estate boasts breathtaking architecture, with intricate woodwork, stained glass windows, and elegant fireplaces that have stood the test of time. The spacious rooms have seen centuries of history unfold, and the property includes a sprawling garden with a centuries-old oak tree that's rumoured to be a gateway to the spirit world.

Some may see the haunted history of this property as a deterrent, but others view it as an opportunity to live in a house with a story to tell. The Big Tuna explained, "There's a niche market for buyers who relish the idea of sharing their home with friendly ghosts. It's a chance to become a part of Aurora's rich history."

Indeed, it seems there are prospective buyers who are drawn to the thrill of living in a haunted house. One such prospective buyer, Al Wilson, is considering purchasing the estate. "I've always been fascinated by



—Image by Raphael Claphe from Pixabay

the supernatural, and when I heard about Evershadow, I couldn't resist taking a look," Al shared. "The idea of sharing my home with spirits is intriguing, not to mention the unique conversation starter at parties!"

As Halloween approaches, the fate of Evershadow Estate remains uncertain. Will a brave buyer like Al take on the task of restoring this historic haunted house to its former glory? Or will the ghosts of Aurora continue to call it home?

Evershadow Estate is a chilling reminder that in the world of real estate, every property has a story. For those who dare to step inside, this house offers a chance to be a part of a spine-tingling tale that transcends the ordinary and who knows, perhaps a ghostly roommate or two. Aurora's haunted history lives on, and it's up to the brave and bold, like Al, to decide if they want to write the next chapter in the story of Evershadow Estate.

If you're in the market for unique properties in Aurora, consider Julien Laurion's real estate services to help you find your next home, whether it's a charming historic mansion or a cozy contemporary abode. Aurora's haunted history lives on, and it's up to the brave and the bold.

Julien Laurion AKA Big Tuna is a local Real Estate Sale Representative with Royal LePage Your Community Realty in Aurora. I am a real estate agent who has expertise in both Real Estate and Renovations and has been involved in this community for over 20 years. If you have a question for my monthly article or if you are considering buying, selling or leasing a home please feel free to call or email me directly at (416) 402-5530 or julien@bigtuna.ca or by alternatively visiting my website www.bigtuna.ca or Facebook page @bigtunarealty

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Warranty coverage on a resale home? Yes, it's possible

(NC) If you've got your eye on a resale house or condominium unit that is less than seven years old, you're in luck. Not only do you get to own a home that has the latest building innovations, but you also benefit from a builder's warranty on work and materials.

That's because the standard seven-year warranty on new homes in Ontario stays with every home even after it's sold by the original owner.

Knowing how much coverage you have and how the warranty works will ensure you don't miss out on any protection – and the sooner you find out, the better.

DETERMINING YOUR COVERAGE

The online Ontario Builder Directory, available on the Home Construction Regulatory Authority's website, makes it easy to confirm your home's warranty details. Simply enter the address and you'll see your home's warranty start and end dates. You'll also have access to the builder's information, which will come in handy if you need to report any issues.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COVERAGE

Ontario's new-home warranty is broken down into one-, two- and seven-year coverages. The one-year warranty covers general defects in work and materials. The two-year warranty covers defects in your home's plumbing, electrical and heating systems, water penetration through the foundation or other parts of your home, defects related to exterior cladding and Ontario Building Code violations that affect health and safety. Finally, the seven-year warranty provides coverage against major structural defects.

USING THE REMAINING COVERAGE

Before you can take advantage of remaining warranty coverage, you'll need to provide Tarion, Ontario's new-home warranty administrator, with a copy of your purchase agreement. As soon as your name is on file as the current owner, you're good to go. You can even register online to submit claims and access your home's warranty history.

Find more warranty information at tarion.com.

www.newscanada.com



Furnish a home for comfort



The pandemic changed much about the way people live, including a propensity for spending more time at home.

In 2020, people spent far less waking time, roughly an hour and a half less on average, with people outside of their own households.

Though restrictions that limited social interactions have long since been lifted, spending time at home has remained popular. With all that extra time on their hands, respondents have been pouring their energy into fixing up their homes. Lawns, kitchens and living rooms are popular spaces to renovate.

As people continue to fix up their homes, they may be interested in ways to make them more comfortable. Certain furnishings can ensure living spaces are comfortable places to pass the time.

ENSURE AN ABUNDANCE OF LIGHT.

One stark overhead light will not create a cozy environment. Introduce groupings of illumination where you hope residents and guests will congregate to engage in conversation. Utilize different lighting sources, such as task lighting, table and floor lamps, recessed or ambient lighting, and even candles. Warm temperature light bulbs will add to that comfortable feeling.

ORDINATE DESIGNS FOR EACH SEASON.

Crisp cotton and breezy linens are great for the warm weather, but when the colder temperatures arrive, it's time to swap for flannel or jersey. Folded quilts or throws on the sofa also can be handy for chilly evenings. Make subtle changes to the home as the temperature changes to epitomize comfort in your spaces.

SPLURGE ON YOUR SOFA AND BED.

Much time will be spent lounging on the couch or sleeping in your bed. It's worthwhile to invest in pieces that are durable and, above all else, comfortable. While these items may be more expensive up front, the comfort they provide will be well worth it.

SOFTEN HARSH LINES.

Tricks like incorporating round area rugs or using oval or round pillows can break up the straight line of rooms and even modern furniture pieces. Opt for soft and inviting textiles as well. Textural elements, such as woven decor baskets, also can soften harsh lines.

INTRODUCE ORGANIC ELEMENTS.

Home entertaining expert Julie Blanner says plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetables bring life to a space. Choose easy-care plants if you do not have a green thumb, or swap out freshly cut blooms in vases as pops of colour and fresh elements are needed.

UTILIZE WARM PAINT COLOURS.

Cool-toned paints can make a space seem colder and more utilitarian or clinical. When looking at swatches, select paints that have warm undertones. Eggshell and satin sheens will be more inviting and evoke a cozy feel more effectively than flat or matte finishes.

These are just a few ways to build a cozy and comfortable home.

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The benefits of working with an interior designer

Homes require an investment of time, energy and money. The payoff of those investments is substantial, and the benefits of homeownership are more profound than even longtime homeowners may recognize.

Homes are undoubtedly a point of pride for millions of homeowners, and that sense of fulfillment is even greater when interiors are up-to-date and welcoming. Home trends come and go, and busy homeowners can be forgiven if they're not able to keep up with the latest interior design styles. That's the job of a skilled interior designer. Working with such professionals when redoing a home's interior can make all the difference and increase the already profound sense of pride many homeowners have in their homes.

INTERIOR DESIGNERS CAN HELP NARROW DOWN THE POSSIBILITIES.

A simple internet search before beginning a home renovation project will turn up millions of results. That can leave homeowners' heads spinning as they try to identify their own style and plan a project that coordinates with their preferences. Experienced interior designers can help homeowners identify their style and offer practical insight as they work with clients to choose elements to incorporate into spaces they aspire to renovate.

INTERIOR DESIGNERS CAN ENSURE A ROOM DOESN'T STICK OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB.

Just because a design looks good on the internet does not mean it will work well in every home, particularly if only one room is being renovated. Interior designers recognize that and can steer homeowners in the direction of designs that will fit the larger theme of the home while still offering a fresh look and feel.

INTERIOR DESIGNERS CAN SAVE HOMEOWNERS MONEY AND HEADACHES.

Renovation projects can be pricey, and that price tag only goes up when mistakes are made. Interior designers

advise clients on furnishings and other design components, and that advice can save homeowners money in the long run. Furnishings may be returnable, but such returns typically come with sizable fees. By directing clients toward furnishings and other components that fit the overall design scheme, interior designers are saving homeowners the cost and headaches associated with fixable yet expensive mistakes.

INTERIOR DESIGNS ARE UP-TO-DATE ON THE LATEST TRENDS.

Real estate and design trends come and go, and dated designs can adversely affect what homeowners recoup at resale. Homeowners who want to update their home interiors with the ultimate goal of selling their homes can work with experienced interior designers who know which trends are in and which are out. That knowledge can make it easier and more lucrative to sell a home.

Homes are a significant investment, and investing in the services of an experienced interior designer can ensure homeowners maximize the value of their homes.

Owner's suite renovation ideas for luxury spaces

An owner's suite is a sanctuary for homeowners. It's a place where adults can retreat, relax and unwind after a busy day.

While the largest bedroom in the home typically is dubbed the "owner's suite," it cannot be classified as a suite unless there is an adjoining bathroom. An owner's suite also may have many more unique features that individuals may want to incorporate into a remodel. Here are some ideas to consider.

UPGRADED CLOSET

Those who will be overhauling the walls and layout of the bedroom can configure the space to make room for a serious closet overhaul. A spacious, walk-in closet that has built-in shelves, drawers and rods can improve the functionality of the bedroom. Draw dividers and other components also can optimize space.

SITTING AREA

In large suites, homeowners may have the potential to set up a sitting area in one portion of the room away from the bed. This area can have a sofa, chairs, chaise, or other furniture and make for an ideal spot to read and lounge. Some people also enjoy having a television adjacent to the sitting area so they can watch a show in the privacy of the bedroom.

FIREPLACE

Fireplaces add a unique ambiance to bedrooms and make for cozy spaces in which to cuddle up. While a traditional, roaring wood fire is one option, there is much less mess and fuss with a gas fireplace. Some gas fireplaces may not even have to be vented, and they can be turned on with the flip of a switch.

PRIVATE PATIO OR BALCONY

Owners who want to go the extra mile in owner's suite renovations can incorporate outdoor spaces into the plans. Many homes are now being built with owner's suites on the first floor, facilitating the possibility of aging in place at home. With this layout, the bedroom can be opened up to the outdoors by way of a sliding door or French doors. Decking or a patio can be outside of the room, or even a covered space similar to a Florida room. Those with second-floor suites may want to consider a small deck or balcony where bistro seating can be placed.

LUXURY BATH

Owners can turn the en suite bathroom into something out of a spa. A steam shower; heated floors; a separate area for the toilet, closed off from the rest of the bathroom; and dual vanities and sinks can make this a place that screams luxury and comfort. Do not forget dimmer switches for lighting and even the inclusion of some new aromatherapy technology to increase the potential for relaxation.



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Small renovations that can make a big impact

Home renovations provide a host of benefits. Such projects can increase resale value and improve the safety, aesthetics and functionality of a home.

Some homeowners may employ the mantra “go big or go home” when they embark on home improvements, thinking that only the largest renovations produce noticeable change. But that’s not the case. Various smaller renovations can provide a lot of bang for homeowners’ bucks as well.

COUNTERTOPS (AND HARDWARE): A complete kitchen overhaul may stretch some homeowners’ budgets. However, changing an older countertop for a new material can provide the facelift a kitchen needs. While changing the cabinets may be home-

owners’ ultimate goal, swapping hardware in dated finishes for newer handles and pulls can provide low-cost appeal.

PAINT: Painting a space is an inexpensive improvement that adds maximum impact. Paint can transform dark and drab rooms into bright and airy oases. Paint also can be used to create an accent wall or cozy nooks. Homeowners also can showcase their personalities with their choice of paint colours.

LIGHTING: Homeowners should not underestimate what a change in lighting can do. When rooms or exterior spaces are illuminated, they take on entirely new looks. It’s worth it to invest in new lighting, whether it’s a dramatic hanging light over the dining room table or task lighting in dim spaces.

WEATHERPROOFING: Improving windows, doors, weatherstripping, and insulation in a home can offer visual appeal and help homeowners save money.

The initial investment may be significant, but those costs will pay off in energy savings. According to One Main Financial, space heating is the largest energy expense the average American homeowner has, accounting for around 45 percent of all energy costs.

MUDROOM: Turn an entryway into a more functional space with the addition of cabinets, benches or custom-designed storage options that perfectly fit the area. Cubbies and cabinets can corral shoes, umbrellas, hats, bags, and much more.

ACCENT UPDATES: Any space, whether it’s inside or outside a home, can get a fresh look with new decorative accents. Invest in new throw pillows and even slipcovers for living room sofas. Use new tile or paint the brick on a fireplace in a den, then update the mantel with decorative displays. Purchase wall art that can bring different colours into a room. Change the cushions on deck furniture and buy colour-coordinated planters.



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Did you know?

Certain areas of a home are more likely to draw the interest of prospective buyers when a house goes on the market.

When that day comes, many realtors and homeowners rely on staging to make a home as attractive as possible during an open house or appointment viewing. According to a 2019 report from the National Association of Realtors, staging the living room is most important for buyers, with

47 percent of buyers indicating a well-staged living room had an effect on their view of the home. The owner’s suite (42 percent) and the kitchen (35 percent) were found to be the next most important rooms to stage. Though the report is generally concerned with selling a home, the conclusions in the report are something renovation-minded homeowners can keep in mind. If prospective buyers are most impressed by well-staged living rooms, owners’ suites and kitchens, it stands to reason that those same rooms, when well-designed and recently renovated, will elicit a similarly positive reaction if homeowners ultimately decide to sell their homes in the future.

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8 steps to a more functional kitchen

A kitchen is often the most utilized room in a house. Meals may be prepared, cooked and often eaten in kitchens, and the room is often utilized as a homework spot or a makeshift place to pay bills and stay on top of household needs. By enhancing the organization and functionality of the kitchen, homeowners can enjoy these popular spaces even more.

Homeowners have increased their spending on home improvements in recent years. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies for Harvard University, project spending rose to \$472 billion in 2022 from \$328 billion in 2019. It's estimated consumers will have spent \$485 billion by the end of 2023. Kitchen renovations were the most popular upgrade and accounted for the highest budgets in 2021, according to Houzz. When the time comes to renovate a kitchen, homeowners can take steps to make these spaces more organized and

therefore functional. Here are eight tips to creating a more functional kitchen.

1 INCREASE STORAGE, AND THEN INVEST IN MORE.

Make the most of corner cabinets and other potential dead spots in a kitchen. Various products can be used to organize awkwardly angled or shaped areas. Kitchen designers also can work with you to reconfigure cabinets and kitchen layouts.

2 ORGANIZE UTENSILS AND DISHES AROUND THE SINK/DISHWASHER.

Rather than traversing the kitchen to put clean dishes away, make loading and unloading the dishwasher that much easier by locating commonly used items next to and above it. Similarly, place frequently used saucepans, baking dishes and other items near the oven or food preparation area.

3 UTILIZE DRAWER AND CABINET ORGANIZERS.

Make a place for everything in the kitchen. Take out all items and see what you need and use all the time. Then coordinate storage around those items so everything fits perfectly. Pull-out shelves and Lazy Susans also can facilitate access.

4 ADD SHELVES TO CABINETS.

If you can afford to have a custom-built kitchen, by all means design cabinets according to preference. If you're using standard cabinets, you may have to reconfigure shelves and spacing to fit the items you have. This also will help you maximize cabinet space.

5 ORGANIZE THE GARBAGE.

Have a pull-out drawer or cabinet to store trash bins. Separate compost, trash and recycling needs.

6 CREATE CONTINUITY IN THE ROOM.

Many open concept homes will have kitchens open up to another room in the home. Mirror the design scheme from elsewhere in the house, and make sure that the flow between spaces is not obstructed.

7 CREATE A BEVERAGE STATION.

A beverage station can minimize the time needed to make a cup of tea or coffee or for the kids to grab juice or chocolate milk.

8 HAVE A WORKSPACE IN THE KITCHEN.

Whether paying bills, making a grocery list or leaving notes for the family, a dedicated workspace can add more function to the room. Be sure there is task lighting nearby and ample overhead lighting to ensure that all kitchen needs are illuminated properly.

A more functional kitchen can make this already popular space even more so.



3 modern kitchen features to consider

It's well-documented that kitchens are the most popular rooms in many homes. Kitchens are where families tend to congregate during holiday celebrations, and many a child has tackled their homework as mom or dad prepares dinner just a few steps away.

Whether homeowners are planning a full-scale remodel or a few tweaks to update the room, the following are three popular features of modern kitchens.

1 KITCHEN ISLAND

A recent survey from interior design experts at Houzz found that kitchen islands are popular for a variety of reasons. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated they enjoy eating at kitchen islands, while 49 percent reported they like islands for entertaining. Forty-five percent of respondents like socializing around kitchen islands. Islands provide a versatile functionality that comes in handy when preparing meals on typical weeknights and when hosting friends and family on special occasions like holidays and birthdays. Islands come in a variety of shapes and sizes and can be customized to fit just about any space. Mobile islands can be utilized in small kitchens when homeowners want the extra prep space but think the kitchen would be too cramped if a permanent island were added.

2 DEEP SINK

The popularity of farmhouse-style sinks is proof that large and deep sinks are sought-after among today's homeowners. Farmhouse sinks may be best suited to a particular aesthetic, but a 2021 study from the National Association of Home Builders found that side-by-side double sinks and walk-in pantries were the most popular of 30 listed kitchen features. That study surveyed more than 3,200 recent and prospective home buyers. Deep sinks are especially useful for people who love to cook, making them a solid addition to any kitchen where home chefs ply their trade most nights of the week.

3 STORAGE

As the NAHB study indicated, kitchen storage space is sought after among modern homeowners. As home cooks expand their culinary horizons and cook more elaborate meals, they need extra places to store specialty pots and pans, ingredients and other materials. Homeowners looking to add more storage in the kitchen can consult with a local contractor about how to create such space. A walk-in pantry can do the trick, but homeowners with kitchens where space is more limited may need to get a little more creative. Sliding-door pantries and roll-out shelving in existing cabinets can add functional space in kitchens with close quarters.

Modern kitchens are visual marvels and highly functional spaces. A new island, a deep sink and some extra storage space can help homeowners transform their existing kitchens into spaces that cater to their every need.



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