

The time to buy is when you're ready

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Is the hot real estate market cooling? Will the bubble burst? Will the HST, higher interest rates and tighter mortgage restrictions push you out of the market?

The media may fuss over such things, says John Geha, president of Canadian operations for Coldwell Banker Real Estate, but that's not why people buy homes. "We buy a home because it's our lifestyle," he says.

And then we take great pride in our ownership, he says; we cherish our homes. The real estate market in Canada now is "very hot," says Geha, who is based in Burlington, Ont. but who was on the West Coast this week visiting operations.

He expects the market will slow in the third and fourth quarters of this year and after that remain stable into 2011-12. Geha, who was previously based in Toledo, Ohio, says the U.S. housing market is "a mess" but the Canadian market is different.

The economy isn't spiking; there's no bubble to burst. "There's no instability in the market," he says. "The tightening of credit will not hurt us. "I don't see any panic here in Canada."

The market will continue to be driven by older people downsizing, by young first-time buyers wanting to get a foothold in building equity in a home, and by a relatively new force in the market: 30-40-year-old renters who are taking the plunge into home ownership.

Wayne Dumbrell, owner of Coldwell Banker Vancouver Island Realty in Parksville, Nanaimo and Courtenay and a mortgage broker, agrees "there is no interest-rate stampede here." Instead, people continue to buy equity in a home as an important "wealth-building component" of their portfolios, he says. "Its stability has been proven again and again."

In Parksville-Qualicum, the single-family home is the overwhelming choice. In March, 118 residential properties changed hands: 72 single-family (average price \$377,139), 11 single-family waterfront (\$788,455), seven condo apartments (\$255,429), six condo patio homes (\$288,167), four townhouses (\$284,750), and 18 lots (\$152,284).



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Wayne Dumbrell, Broker/Owner of Coldwell Banker Vancouver Island Realty, in front of a Parksville side-by-side family-style three-bedroom duplex that sold within five days of listing.

It's a lot of money, so Geha offers this helpful advice when considering a purchase: "Make a smart decision." As obvious as that sounds, says Dumbrell, real estate is an industry where things change quickly and it's easy to make a mistake on the internet and end up dealing with the wrong people.

Realtors are kept up to date, he says, and Coldwell Banker realtors itemize their services and sign an agreement to release any seller who isn't satisfied with their services from their listing agreement.

"It's all a matter of integrity and trust," says Dumbrell, "and that's what differentiates us from the fringe aspects of the industry."

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