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Improved Weather Sparking Spring Rebound in Real Estate: Royal LePage

Improving weather is sparking a spring pickup in Canada's residential real estate market, according to one of the country's leading real estate companies.

Royal LePage says that after a "remarkably drab winter" for real estate activity, the final month of the first quarter saw inventory increase noticeably as the industry saw what had been an underperforming spring market turn a corner in the final few weeks.

The company's latest House Price Survey, released Tuesday, found that most regions showed healthy year-over-year price growth, with the average price of a home in Canada rising between 2.5 per cent and 5.4 per cent

For example, the average price of a two-storey home increased 5.4 per cent to \$428,943 in the quarter, while detached bungalows rose 4.4 per cent year-over-year to \$380,765. Standard condominiums posted lower gains of 2.5 per cent to \$252,174.

Regionally, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton saw the highest price increases, while parts of Atlantic Canada, with much of its inventory still under snow, posted the

lowest gains overall.

In Montreal, year-over-year prices increased between 3.6 per cent for detached homes and 3.3 per cent for semi-detached, while prices for standard condominiums remained relatively flat.

"It appears that it took only the slightest hint of spring to bring home sellers out of hibernation," said Phil Soper, president and chief executive of Royal LePage.

"We are finally seeing the arrival of housing inventory in seasonally appropriate quantities across the nation. When combined with pent up demand following a particularly long and harsh winter, the stage is set for a robust 2014 spring market. This is particularly good news for buyers, as the home price spikes we have seen in a number of cities should be alleviated by this additional supply."

Meanwhile, with a series of supportive economic factors at play "we expect the country's real estate market to continue the strong showing it posted in the second half of 2013," Soper



said, noting among other things favourable interest rates and an improving U.S. economy fuelling demand for Canadian exports.

"Suggestions of an overheated real estate market and bubble continue within the mainstream dialogue, but are becoming less frequent," he added. "Of the core housing types, the condominium segment remains the most vulnerable to short-term price softness in light of increased inventory, but the situation is limited to only a few cities. The medium- to longer-term prognosis for this housing sector remains very positive."

Source: The Ottawa Citizen

7 Easy Budget-Friendly Backyard Makeovers

Matt Blashaw, host of DIY Network's *Yard Crashers*, offers some easy, inexpensive ideas for upgrading your backyard and outdoor living areas.



Tips From a Pro—As host of DIY Network's *Yard Crashers*, Matt Blashaw has seen plenty of backyards in need of sprucing up. The common thread in all of them? A lack of planning when it comes to outdoor space. Fortunately, it's easier—and less expensive—than you may think to update your backyard. Here, seven ideas from Matt that can give your backyard a boost without breaking the bank.

Define Your Spaces—Deciding what spaces you need—dining area, cooking area, shady lounging area, play area—and clearly defining them can make a big visual impact on a yard. Doing this can be as inexpensive as repositioning the furniture and accessories you already have. You may also want to build or buy a

storage shed to keep kids' toys out of sight when not in use.

Create a Garden Path—Adding a meandering path gives a polished look to an otherwise untamed space. Rather than using pavers, Matt suggests quarter-inch crushed rock, available in a variety of colors. Drive in stakes to determine the shape, then wrap bender board (used for edging lawns) around them. Lay down four to five inches of crushed rock and flatten the surface with a plate compactor, which you can rent from a garden- or home-supply center.

Concrete Cover-Up—For anyone who has a plain concrete patio (and, according to Matt, many of us do), there are two easy, inexpensive ways to give it a fresh look. The first is to coat the surface with masonry stain in a color of your choice, like warm honey or deep brown. You might even consider a checkerboard pattern. A second option: Lay slate tiles over the concrete with a thin-set mortar like VersaBond to create an elegant appearance.

Try a Trellis—You see trellises in garden centers all the time, and you've probably never even thought about picking one up, but these architectural details can add a quick and easy accent in the yard. Matt advises placing one toward the back of the garden as a focal point, per-

haps using it to mark the entrance to a sitting area or vegetable bed. Choose a flowering vine to plant on either side.

Add Some Paint—Single-story homes, Matt observes, are perfect for this idea: Paint the back of your house a different color than the other three sides, opting for a shade that compliments the garden. Neutral shades like taupe, beige, or light gray work well and can coordinate with landscaping features such as a stone path or a honey-hued fence.

Think Vertically—If your backyard features a large, flat lawn, add some dimension by positioning boulders (available at landscaping supply stores) throughout the space. You might choose to arrange them individually or cluster a few together. Don't be afraid to cut into the lawn to accommodate them, Matt notes, and leave some space around for planting colorful perennials or small shrubs.

Mulch, Mulch, Mulch—Matt calls mulch "the carpet of the backyard." Simply by laying like-colored mulch on all flowerbeds and exposed soil in your backyard, you can give your space a finished, unified look. As an added benefit, mulch blocks weeds and holds much-needed nutrients for your plants.

Source: bobvila.com

Bancroft and District Real Estate Board Yearly Statistics



Year:	Total Listing Activity YTD:	Total Sales YTD:	Monthly Sales Volume (Apr):	Total Sales Volume YTD:
2012	515	120 Units	\$8,743,146	\$19,711,946
2013	488	101 Units	\$6,315,400	\$17,571,799
2014	417	101 Units	\$2,625,000	\$14,472,300

What's Happening in Bancroft

May 1st: Thursday Morning Coffee Club at the Chamber, Bancroft Railway Station, 8:30 am to 10:00 am.

May 1st: Ministry of Northern Development & Mines Southern Ontario Spring Seminar, Tweed Fairgrounds Agricultural Building, 9:30 am.

May 2nd: Shades of Yesterday, Village Playhouse.

May 3rd: Kashub Day.

May 3rd: Hat Off to the Hospice 2014 Gala, North Hastings Community Centre, 4:15 pm.

May 3rd to May 4th: Quinte Quilters' Quilt Show, Quinte Curling Club.

May 6th: Public Discussion About the 2014 Budget, Bancroft Club 580, 7:00 pm.

May 7th: Forestry Tour Nature Discovery Tours, Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce, 9:00 am.

May 7th: Casino Rama Bus and Buffet, Maynooth, Bancroft & Cardiff, 8:45 am.

May 8th: Thursday Morning Coffee Club at the Chamber, Bancroft Railway Station, 8:30 am to 10:00 am.



Get involved in your community

Members Market, Bancroft Rail Station, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

May 10th: Broads-Way, Bancroft Village Playhouse, 2:00 pm & 8:00 pm.

May 12th: Community Lunch, Palmer Rapids Community Centre.

May 13th: Philomena, Bancroft Village Playhouse, 4:15 pm & 7:00 pm.

May 15th: Thursday Morning Coffee Club at the Chamber, Bancroft Railway Station, 8:30 am to 10:00 am.

May 10th: Bancroft Pet Festival Event, Main Street Bancroft, 11:00 am to 4:00 pm.

May 10th: Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce 1st Annual

May 17th to May 18th: Palmer River Festival, Madawaska River, Palmer Rapids.

May 17th: Bancroft Ice Breaker Street Party, South Algonquin Eatery & Pub.

May 22nd: Thursday Morning Coffee Club at the Chamber, Bancroft Railway Station, 8:30 am to 10:00 am.

May 24th: Chimney Swifts Tour Nature Discovery Tours, Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce, 9:00 am.

May 25th: Purina Walk for Dog Guides, Riverside Park, Bancroft, 12:30 pm.

May 28th to June 29th: Kevin Hockley Exhibition, Art Gallery of Bancroft.

May 29th: Thursday Morning Coffee Club at the Chamber, Bancroft Railway Station, 8:30 am to 10:00 am.

May 31st: Fish Hatchery Tour Nature Discovery Tours, Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce, 9:00 am.

For more information or to see other upcoming events visit the Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce website: www.bancroftdistrict.com

Understanding Reverse Mortgages



A reverse mortgage is a loan that is designed for homeowners 55 years of age and older. A reverse mortgage is secured by the equity in the home, which is the difference between the value of your home and the unpaid balance of any current

mortgage. It allows homeowners to obtain cash without having to sell their home.

The Canadian Home Income Plan (CHIP), which is offered by Home Equity Bank, is the main source of

most reverse mortgage products that are available in Canada. You can also speak to your financial institution about other options that may meet your needs.

With a reverse mortgage you don't make any payments. Instead, the

interest on your reverse mortgage accumulates, and the equity that you have in your home decreases with time. If you sell your house or your home no longer is your principal residence, you must repay the loan and any interest that has accumulated.

Before you decide to get a reverse mortgage, take the time to understand all the terms that apply, and to weigh the advantages and disadvantages.

For more information please visit the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada's website at: www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca

Spaghetti Squash Lasagna



To continue with the eating healthy theme I have going, here is another winning dish! I made this for a dinner party I hosted not too long ago and it was a hit. It is perfect for entertaining because you can prepare it the night before so it can be cooked for the party. It is simple and oh so tasty, enjoy!

Ingredients:

2 Spaghetti squash (serves four)
1 Jar of spaghetti sauce (homemade if you have it!)
1 Bag of four cheese Italiano
Parmesan Cheese

Directions:

Cut Spaghetti squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Place cut side down on a baking sheet and bake at 400°F for approximately 1 hour until tender. Cool and using a fork, scoop out the squash into strands that resemble spaghetti noodles. I place some coffee filters into a strainer and then let the squash drain before I use them in the "bowls".

Using the squash "bowls", place some sauce in the bottom, then place squash on top, more sauce and grated cheese of your choice. I use 4 Cheese Italiano and then I sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top. You can use your own recipe for Lasagna with Ricotta cheese. Use your imagination!

Bake the "bowls" at 400°F for 20-30 minutes until hot and bubbly. Enjoy!

Murder Mystery

One evening there was a murder in the home where a married couple and their son and daughter resided. The victim was one of the family members. We know that one of the family members was a witness and the other an accomplice to the murder. Who was the murderer?

These are the things we know for sure:

1. The witness and the one who helped the murderer were not of the same sex.
2. The oldest person and the witness were not of the same sex.
3. The youngest person and the victim were not of the same sex.
4. The one who helped the murderer was older than the victim.
5. The father was the oldest member of the family.
6. The murderer was not the youngest member of the family.

The Mother

Rx Laughter

always the best medicine



"When I said it might sell faster if you put in a new driveway, I meant if you repaved the old one."

Can You Hear Me?

An old man went to the Doctor complaining that his wife could barely hear. The Doctor suggested a test to find out the extent of the problem. "Stand far behind her and ask her a question, and then slowly move up and see how far away you are when she first responds."

The old man excited to finally be working on a solution for the problem, runs home and sees his wife preparing supper. "Honey" the man asks standing around 20 feet away "what's for supper?" After receiving no response he tried it again 15 feet away, and again no response. Then again at 10 feet away and again no response. Finally he was 5 feet away "honey what's for supper?" She replies "For the fourth time it's lasagna!"