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Taking Real Estate Service To New Heights!

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ecoENERGY retrofit in full swing!

Although ecoENERGY Retrofit—Homes runs until March 31, 2011, the Deputy Director, Housing Division, Office of Energy Efficiency, Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) reports that it's already "very, very successful". More than 390,000 Canadians have signed up and have up to 18 months to complete energy-efficiency projects. Of these, almost 133,000 have already completed their energy retrofits.



The federal program, with provincial counterparts, encourages energy-efficiency improvements which may also increase property value or saleability. As energy costs and inflation increase, lower heating and cooling costs will be the real bonus for homeowners. Complete renovations under the grant program this year and you may also be eligible for the federal \$1,350.00 tax credit.

New eligible retrofits include the replacement of cooling equipment with ENERGY STAR qualified models, the installation of solar hot water heaters, water-saving toilets, grey water heat-recovery systems and more. Each improvement is eligible for a specific grant amount.

To qualify for grants, you must first hire an NRCAN-certified energy advisor to conduct the pre-retrofit portion of the detailed, on-site evaluation of your home's energy use from the attic to the foundation—The Energy Audit. The resulting personalized report includes a checklist of recommended retrofits which will improve energy efficiency and, in some cases, reduce water consumption, of your home. If you want specific improvements made, discuss these with the energy advisor before the audit.

When you're spending your money and want to qualify for a grant, tax credit or other benefit, be skeptical of what you are told—verify details—and make sure everything agreed to is in writing. It's essential to apply the same care required for successfully contracting with installers, builders, renovators and tradespeople under any circumstances.

For further information, visit <http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/personal/> and click on the ecoEnergy Retrofit - Homes icon.

Eye on Ottawa Real Estate

Members of the Ottawa Real Estate Board (OREB) sold 1,216 residential properties in August 2009 compared with 1,181 in August 2008, an increase of 3 percent. There were 1,577 sales in July 2009.

"August was another solid month for home sales in Ottawa. With strong sales and a listing inventory that is still very low, the capital remains in a seller's market position," said OREB's President. "Sales year-to-date are now up 2.6 percent over last year's sales for the same period, which reflects consumer confidence in the local real estate market."

The average price of residential properties, including condominiums, sold in August in the Ottawa area was \$315,074, an increase of 12.3 percent over August 2008.

Call today for real estate advice and information!



Tool box Essentials for Every Homeowner

If you're looking for the perfect housewarming gift, check out a hardware store. People moving into a new place will probably want to hang a few things and change a few things.

There will always be repairs, whether you've lived in a home for a month or for 15 years. The gutters may come loose or shutters can fall off. Doors can stick, and cabinet doors can loosen. Faucets drip and drains get clogged.

But which tools should every home tool box include?

Start with the basics: many experts recommend a screwdriver with interchangeable bits, a set of pliers, a wrench, a hammer and a power drill-driver to start.

As you become more comfortable with repairs and with handling tools, you can add to your collection.

It's important that you do research on tool quality or consult with the staff at their hardware store, as the priciest items may not necessarily be the right ones.

You likely can fill your tool box with the essential hand tools for under \$150. The electric drill-driver is more.



SCREWDRIVER

It's hard to find any project that doesn't require screws. This includes putting up blinds, most minor plumbing repairs, hanging a shelf or fixing a doorknob.

At the top of your list of essential tools should be a screwdriver with interchangeable bits – two different size flat and Phillips heads.

The bits fit into the handle and the end of the shaft is a hex driver which fits the size of the bolts on stoves and other appliances.

Many home repair experts say a hand screwdriver is not enough. They recommend a cordless power drill-driver and a bit set that include screwdriver heads.

HAMMERS

They come in different weights and sizes. Some have straight claws, some have curved claws, some have no claws at all. Most carpenters prefer the straight claw, mainly because you can use it to rip things apart. It's good for demolition work, and is also generally easier to pry with.

A 16-ounce hammer is a good all-around tool, although some homeowners may prefer a lighter one; for example, 12 ounces. When you're at the hardware store, simply choose the weight that feels most comfortable in your hand.

You may also want to pick up a small, five-ounce tack hammer for hanging pictures.

PLIERS

Pliers are gripping tools, good for pulling nails, cutting wire, or cutting electrical wires.

Pick up a set that includes standard pliers, needle-nose pliers (which are good for where your fingers can't easily reach) and wire cutters.

For those a little uneasy about the possibility of hitting a finger with a hammer while driving a nail, the needle-nose pliers can be used to hold the nail.

WRENCHES

There's always something you're going to have to turn that doesn't have a screw on it.

In an adjustable wrench, the jaws can be opened and closed to fit the object to be turned.

Choose one big enough to do a few plumbing repairs, such as unscrewing the trap under the sink when it gets clogged.

UTILITY KNIFE

With a utility knife, you can cut anything from cardboard to packaging to duct tape, plastic sheeting, and floor tile. You'll also be able to cut carpet and drywall, and scrape caulk.

Safety is an important consideration: you want to make sure that the blade can retract.

You should also choose a utility knife that will allow you to replace the blades without disassembling the knife.
