



“Real estate has changed more in the last 12 months than it has in the last 12 years.”

Walter Melanson
PROPERTYGUYS.COM

Steve Maxwell



HOUSEWORKS

Carbon monoxide detectors

MANY CANADIANS ARE WOEFULLY unprepared when it comes to protecting themselves against a potentially fatal threat, and I'd like to see this change. This threat centres around the winter heating season and protecting yourself against it requires less than \$100 of simple equipment. Carbon monoxide is the issue, and with cold weather on its way, a carbon monoxide detector is more important than ever. This is especially true if you live in a modern, energy-efficient home.

The hazards of carbon monoxide (CO) shouldn't be news to any of us. This odourless, colourless gas is deadly, but what you might not realize is how the carbon monoxide hazard is rising as time goes on. As strange as it sounds, improved home-building standards are one reason why.

Carbon monoxide kills because it's so chemically eager to latch onto oxygen, wherever it exists. When CO enters the body through your lungs, it binds up enough oxygen in the blood stream to starve vital organs. There's not enough pain or discomfort to wake sleeping victims from the slow silent death, and that's

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Game changer

New rules providing flexibility for buyers, sellers

By Heather Clarke
Contributing Writer

WHEN LIZ CUMMINGS STARTED looking for a new home last fall, she knew she didn't have much time to devote to her search. She spent time pouring over listings, but struggled with narrowing down her choices from the limited information.

"When I was using MLS.ca, I was always driving out to see homes because I couldn't figure out enough about the area online," says Cummings. "It was a huge waste of my time."

When her brother told her about a new site called ViewPoint.ca, Cummings decided to give it a try — and says the experience was "like night and day."

"I could see the assessment value, the street view, and get enough information to narrow my search down to just two or three houses I wanted to see," says Cummings. "I had such a small amount of time to look for a new home, that I honestly wouldn't have found my current home without ViewPoint."

ViewPoint CEO Bill McMullin created the site because he felt he could improve the experience of buying and selling property. In 2008, he began to design a real estate portal that would combine property boundaries, MLS listings, private listings, street-level photography, aerial photography, assessment history, sales history, and school boundaries — all in one place, on a Google map. In January of 2010, ViewPoint.ca was introduced to the public — and it's continued to evolve ever since.

"It used to be inconvenient and time-consuming to explore and learn about real estate. People would have to visit a bunch of different websites, or ask a real estate agent to get the information," says McMullin. "Whether someone is buying or selling, they need a lot of data and information in order to make good decisions. ViewPoint.ca has proven to be a powerful — and sometimes addictive — tool."

Cummings says it's clear the real estate industry is changing, and she appreciates the increasing number of options available to buyers and sellers, allowing them to make more individual decisions.

On Oct. 24, the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) signed an agreement that allows home-sellers to choose what services they want from a real estate agent, and only pay for the services they choose. The Competition Bureau also challenged the "anti-competitive" restrictions CREA imposed on real estate agents, and CREA agreed to stop discriminating against agents who are hired by sellers simply to list their property on MLS.ca. CREA could not be reached for comment on these changes.

This has opened up a world of possibilities for buyers and sellers who were once limited to one main portal.

PropertyGuys.com is a popular marketing service where private sellers can advertise their properties online. After CREA dropped their "anti-competitive" restrictions, PropertyGuys.com partnered with Realtysellers Real Estate Inc. in July, allowing their customers the option of listing their properties on MLS.ca for a flat fee.

For a private seller, this means their home can be listed on PropertyGuys.com as well as MLS.ca — increasing their chances of a quick sale to the right buyer.

"Real estate has changed more in the last 12 months than it has in the last 12 years," says Walter Melanson, director of Partnerships at PropertyGuys.com. "These changes are extremely positive for buyers and sellers." PropertyGuys.com listings are not currently available on ViewPoint.ca, but Melanson says it could be a future move for them. "There is some benefit in getting more exposure on a different platform, so it was natural for our first choice to be the largest platform, MLS.ca," says Melanson. "But we think ViewPoint has an interesting business model, and we're watching the next moves in the industry to

see what happens."

In the U.S., sites like Zillow.com and Redfin.com have a similar business model to ViewPoint.ca, combining real estate listings with information on nearby schools, shopping, and dining, as well as property assessment details. McMullin is excited about the future of ViewPoint.ca, and says its value is that it enables people to make informed decisions when it comes to real estate. "Buyers and sellers can scope the market and see what comparable properties are selling for, and they can really get an accurate handle on the market by using the site," says McMullin.

"Consumers really want to be in control of the process, particularly the learning process."

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