



This Is Why The Central Is Number One Across The Region Our Top Notch Local Columnist *Keeping You Informed*



Cottage renovations

By Theresa Grant Real Estate columnist

Although we currently seem to be in a struggle to enjoy some actual spring like weather, it won't be long before the weekly grind of loading up the car and taking your place in the steady and sometimes unforgiving line of traffic heading to the cottage on a Friday night is upon us. Most cottagers like to open their cottages around the May 24th weekend. The unofficial start to summer. With this past winter being a little harsher than we are used to here in Southern Ontario, many cottage owners will be needing to do some repairs, while others will just be undertaking

planned renovations. Whichever category you fall under, make sure to protect yourself and your wallet if you plan to hire someone or a company to do the work for you. While there are many reputable companies and good-hearted people that may help you, there are others that will take the money and run. All too often we see the stories in the paper or hear them on the evening news. Some unsuspecting person will listen to a smooth-talking salesperson slash rip-off artist tell them what a fabulous job they can do for them at an amazing price. Usually, they will ask for a sizable amount of money up front. They will tell you that it is to purchase materials and so forth to get the work started. This is where it can get tricky. If you give them cash, they show up for a day or two and request more money, or they may not show up again at all and just be off with the money you gave them.

If you are looking to have some work done on your cottage, it is best to look to the closest small town to your cottage. There is usually a Home Hardware or something like that in the small cottage towns. They would be a good starting point. There are also many local contractors that live full-time in the small cottage towns that may be interested in your project. You might think about advertising exactly what it is you are looking to have done and then interview a few different people for the job. I know a family that offers the use of their cottage for a couple of weeks a year to a fellow in exchange for work that he does while he's there with his family. Regardless of the route you choose in hiring someone to do the work for you, just make sure you are not parting with a large sum of money to an unknown person before any work gets started.

ONTARIO HOUSING MARKET AT ROCK BOTTOM

By Tiffany Ingino - The one-two punch of winter storms and tariff-related economic uncertainty sent a chill through Canadian housing markets in the first quarter. We're now tracking a double-digit quarterly decline in Canadian home sales and a mid-single digit drop in Canadian average home prices. In the last decade, the rate of increase in housing prices has outpaced that of wages significantly. Homes have become unattainable for many Ontarians, not just in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), but across the province. The demand for real estate has skyrocketed, and to combat this issue, industry and government have been focused on increasing the supply of housing in Ontario.

Like everyone living through the housing and cost of living crises in Ontario today, home builders have been struggling too. Housing starts were down 16 per cent in Ontario in 2024, and in some municipalities, they were down over 35 per cent. In many cases, projects are being cancelled, going into receivership, or struggling to close once completed. Builders and developers aren't selling the new homes they build. This sanctions negative consequences for the industry and for Ontarians who hope to buy their own home one day. While prices have dropped somewhat from their pandemic-driven highs, the combination of high-interest rates and buyers waiting for prices to tumble further has created a slow sales market throughout much of the province. The number of home sales in the Greater Toronto Area is on track to be lower than in any year since 2001, when the region's population was roughly 25 per cent smaller than it is today. John Pasalis, president of

Realosophy Realty Inc., adds that sellers have yet to bring down their asking prices deeply enough to offset the increased borrowing costs that buyers face. "It's the combination of these high prices and high interest rates that is keeping a lot of buyers out of the market right now," Pasalis said. In 2025, the Ontario housing market is expected to see a rebound, with a mix of price increases and market conditions. While home prices are projected to increase overall, the rate of growth is expected to be less dramatic than in previous years. Lower interest rates, improved affordability, and pent-up demand are expected to drive increased sales activity, especially in more affordable regions. This will mean Ontarians have a chance at becoming a newhome owner going forward within 2025. Only quarterly into this new year, ontarians are looking at a positive prediction to our housing market. Ontario housing market in 2025 is expected to be a dynamic one, with a mix of price increases, improved affordability, and regional variations. Buyers may find more opportunities in certain regions and for certain property types, while sellers may need to be more competitive in others. The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) has updated its 2025 and 2026 forecasts for home sales activity and average home prices via the Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®) Systems of Canadian real estate boards and associations. CREA released its previous forecast on January 15. While it was too early to incorporate the potential and significant downside risks of a trade war into the forecast at that time, the forecast did state that tariffs

targeting the Canadian economy would put what had been expected to be a recovery year for housing in Canada in jeopardy.

With buyers increasingly fleeing to, or remaining on, the sidelines amid tariff uncertainty, and with the associated economic damage only beginning, sales have continued to fall. Prices in some parts of the country are following suit.

Amid ongoing unpredictability and given the fact that it is still far from clear what interest rates will do this year amid a potential stagflation, all forecasts continue to be subject to unprecedented levels of uncertainty.

At this point, some 482,673 residential properties are forecast to trade hands via Canadian MLS® Systems in 2025, representing a 0.02% decline (no change) from 2024. This represents a large downward revision to the 8.6% increase previously forecasted in January.

The national average home price is forecast to decrease a slight 0.3% on an annual basis to \$687,898 in 2025, which is about \$30,000 lower than forecast back in early January. British Columbia and Ontario are expected to see small declines in average home prices, while in other provinces, expected increases in average home prices have been scaled back to the 3% to 5% range for 2025.

In 2026, national home sales are forecast to improve by 2.9% to 496,487. Sales would fail to crack the half million mark for the fourth straight year. Historically, since 2007, national home sales have surpassed 500,000 units seven times. The national average home price is forecast to edge up by 1.2% from 2025 to \$696,074 in 2026.



What Difference Will You Make to an Employer?

By Nick Kossovan

It's common knowledge that companies don't hire the most qualified candidates. Employers hire the person they believe will deliver the best value in exchange for their payroll cost.

Since most job seekers know the above, I'm surprised that so few mention their Employee Value Proposition (EVP). Most job seekers list their education, skills, and experience without substantiating them and expect employers to determine whether they can benefit their company; hence, most resumes and LinkedIn profiles are just a list of opinions—borderline platitudes—that are meaningless and, therefore, have no

value. Job seekers need to better explain, along with providing evidence, how they'll contribute to an employer's success.

Employers don't hire opinions (read: talk is cheap); they hire results. You're not offering anything tangible when you claim:

- I'm a great communicator.
- I'm detail oriented.
- I'm a team player.

Tangible:

- "At Global Dynamics, I held quarterly town hall meetings with my 22 sales reps, highlighting our accomplishments, identifying opportunity areas, and recognizing outstanding performers."
- "For eight years, I managed Vandelay Industries IT department, overseeing a staff of 18 and a 12-million-dollar budget while coordinating cross-specialty projects. My strong attention to detail is why I never exceeded budget."
- "While working at Cyberdyne Systems, I was part of the customer service team, consisting of nine of us, striving to improve our response time. Through collaboration and sharing of best practices, we reduced our average response time from 48 to 12 business hours, resulting in a 35% improvement in customer feedback ratings."

These examples of tangible answers provide employers with what they most want to hear from candidates but rarely do; what value the candidate will bring to the company. Typically, job seekers present their skills, experience, and unsubstantiated opinions and expect recruiters and employers to figure out their value, which is a lazy practice.

Getting hired isn't based on "I have an MBA in Marketing and Sales," "I've been a web designer for over 15 years," "I'm young, beautiful and energetic," blah, blah, blah.

Likewise, being rejected isn't based on "I'm overqualified," "I'm too old," "I don't have enough education," blah, blah, blah. Getting hired depends entirely on showing employers that you can add value and substance to their company; that you'll serve a purpose.

When you articulate a solid value offer, the "blah, blah, blah" doesn't matter. Job seekers focus too much on the "blah, blah, blah," and when not hired, they say, "It's not me, it's..." The biggest mistake I see job seekers make is focusing on the "blah, blah, blah"—their experience and education—believing this is what interests employers. Hiring managers are more interested in whether you can solve the problems the position exists to solve than in your education and experience.

Not impressive: Education

Impressive: A track record of achieving tangible results.

You aren't who you say you are; you are what you do.

If you want to be somebody who works hard, you have to actually work hard. If you want to be somebody who goes to the gym, you actually have to go to the gym. If you want to be a good friend, spouse, or colleague, you have to actually be a good friend, spouse, or colleague. Actions build reputations, not words.

The biggest challenge job seekers face today is differentiating themselves. To stand out and be memorable, don't be like most job seekers, someone who's all talk and no action. Any recruiter or hiring manager will tell you that the job market is heavily populated with job seekers who talk themselves up, talk a "good game" about everything they can "supposedly" do, drop names, etc., but have nothing to show for it.

More than ever, employers want to hear candidates offer a value proposition summarizing what value they bring. If you're looking for a low-hanging fruit method to differentiate yourself, do what job seekers hardly ever do and make a hard-to-ignore value proposition.

1. Increase sales: "Based on my experience managing Regina and Saskatoon for PharmaKorp, I'm confident that I can increase BioGen's sales by no less than 25% in Winnipeg and the surrounding area by the end of 2025."

2. Reduce cost: "During my 12 years as Taco Town's head of purchasing, I renegotiated contracts with key suppliers, resulting in 15% cost savings, saving the company over \$450,000 annually. I know I can do the same for The Pasta House."

3. Increase customer satisfaction: "During my time at Globex Corporation, I established a systematic feedback mechanism that enabled customers to share their experiences. This led to targeted improvements, increasing our Net Promoter Score by 15 points. I can increase Dunder Mifflin's net promoter score."

4. Save time: "As Zap Delivery's dispatcher, I implemented advanced routing software that analyzed traffic patterns, reducing average delivery times by 20%. My implementation of this software at Froggy's Delivery can reduce your delivery times by at least 20%, if not more."

If you want to achieve job search success as soon as possible, structure your job search with a single thread that's evident and consistent throughout your résumé, LinkedIn profile, cover letters and especially during interviews; clearly convey what difference you'll make to the employer.

Nick Kossovan, a well-seasoned veteran of the corporate landscape, offers advice on searching for a job. You can send him your questions at artoffindingwork@gmail.com