



**Your  
home-buying  
team**

## Your team of helpers

There are people who are trained to help you buy your home. It is a good idea to have a team of them. Some of the team members you *must* use. Others you do not have to use, but they can be very helpful. Without them, you may make mistakes which can cost a lot. If you have a team to help, you need not have so many worries.



### **REALTOR (sounds like REEL-tor)**

A REALTOR is a real estate agent (someone trained to help you buy or sell your home). REALTORS are members of the Canadian Real Estate Association and follow the rules of the association. They can find information for you about many homes. (REALTOR is always



written this way.)

A good REALTOR is very important. You can buy a home yourself, but it is more difficult. REALTORS know if the home you want to buy is a good price; and they will work to get the lowest price for you. They can see problems with a home which you may not see. They may help you find other people for your team. Most of all, a good REALTOR can help you through each step when you buy a home. There are many things to remember and many things that can go wrong. There is often no cost to you when you have a REALTOR to

help you buy. The cost of the REALTOR is often paid by the *vendor* (the seller of the home).

REALTORS will help you to find the kind of home you want, at the kind of price you can pay. They can take you to look at homes until you find the one you like best. They will help you fill in some of the papers when you offer to buy. When you buy a home, it is often called a *home purchase*.

Ask people you know if they can tell you about a REALTOR they think is good. Then meet with the REALTOR to say just what you need and how much you think you can spend. If you think this person does not listen to you, or wants you to buy a home that you are not sure about, look for another one. It is very important that you find a REALTOR you can work with.



If you do not speak English really well, see if you can find a REALTOR who speaks your language. Or have someone with you who will tell you in your own language what the REALTOR says. It is very important to understand.



Ask the REALTOR questions before you start to look for a home. Good ones are trained and have worked for some time at this job. Ask if she or he knows the area you want to live in. If you want to buy a condo, your REALTOR should know all about condos.



## Lender

You will probably need to borrow money to buy your home. Banks and credit unions are the most common lenders, but there are others too. The lender will want to know all about you and how much money you have.

Some lenders have many rules about who they will lend to, but some will help you even if you do not have very much money of your own.

A **mortgage** (sounds like *MOR-gaje*) is the money you borrow to buy a home. It must be repaid, with interest, sometimes over many years. Interest is the extra money you must pay back when you borrow. When people take out a mortgage, they sign a legal paper to say they will pay back so much over so many years (often 25 years), as well as the interest. A mortgage agreement must be renewed every few years. A mortgage may be approved, but it will not be final until the home has been found and checked out by an **appraiser** (sounds like *ap-RAY-zer*) who works for the lender. You can find out about appraisers on the next page.



## Mortgage broker

If you are not sure where to get your mortgage, you may want to ask a mortgage broker to help you find one. This person will look for the best place for you to

get money, with the lowest interest rates. The broker will often be paid for the service by the lender, not you. But make sure to ask, in case you will have to pay.

## Lawyer

You must have a lawyer. A home is the biggest thing you will ever buy, so it is important to make sure there are no mistakes in the papers. Lawyers work on different kinds of law, so find one who knows a lot about home purchase.

Your REALTOR may know a good lawyer you can go to. If the lawyer makes you feel scared or stupid, find another lawyer. You do not need that.

You must pay the lawyer. Before you begin to work with a lawyer, ask how much money it will cost you. It will be about \$500.



Legal papers are written in a way that is hard to understand. Make sure your lawyer has told you carefully and clearly what each paper means. Ask if you did not understand something. Ask again if you need to. It is your

lawyer's job to help you understand papers before you sign them.

## Appraiser

If you have a mortgage, the company lending you the money will usually need an appraiser to look at the home you want



to buy. This person will check the home and say if the price is OK. If the appraiser thinks the home is worth less than the loan you want, you may not be able to borrow all the money you need. You must pay for the appraiser. This appraisal is not the same as a home inspection. It is just for the *lender*.



## Home inspector

Unless the home is new, or has papers to show it has been inspected in the last year or two, it is important to pay for a home inspection. This may cost up to \$350. The inspector will look all over the home, inside and out, and will tell you if anything needs to be fixed (and how much the repairs may cost). This inspection should be done before you sign the final paper to buy the home. If the home inspection shows something that needs to be fixed, you can change your mind about the home, or ask for the price to be less. A home inspection is not the same as an appraisal. It is for *you*.

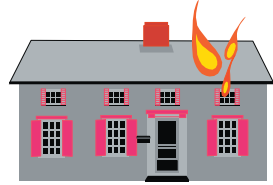


## Insurance (sounds like *in-SHURE-anse*)

Insurance is money you pay each month to a company. Then the company will help you with money if you have a big problem with the house. You may never make a claim for money and you may think the insurance is not needed. But if your home is burned down, or a bad storm damages the roof, or someone steals your things, then the insurance company will pay you the money you need to repair or replace things.

There are 2 different kinds of insurance you must pay, and a third one which may also be good to have:

1. You must have **property insurance** in case there is a fire or flood or some other accident in your home. If that happens, the insurance company will pay to fix the problem. Be careful if you make a claim (that means, if you ask the insurance company to pay for something). You may have to pay more insurance after you have made a claim. If you make two or three claims, the insurance company may not want to keep you as a customer. Only make a claim if there is very bad damage.



2. You will need **mortgage insurance** if you have borrowed more than three quarters ( $3/4$ ) of the money you need for your home. The lender needs you to pay for this insurance. If you can no longer make your mortgage payments and you lose your home, the insurance pays the lender.
3. You may also want to have **life insurance**. You do not have to have this, but it may be a good idea. This insurance means that if you die, the insurance company will pay off all your mortgage at once. Then you do not leave big debts for someone else (your family or your roommate) to pay.



## **Builder or renovator (sounds like *BIL-der* or *REN-o-vate-er*)**

If the home needs repairs or you want to make changes to it, you will need to find a builder or renovator. Ask people you know if they can tell you about a good one. Check builders and renovators carefully. Some may not do good work. Get more than one company to tell you what it will cost. This is called an **estimate**. Make sure the price of the work is written down and also just what needs to be done for that price. Keep the paper carefully, so if there is a problem later, you can prove what was agreed on. Ask the builder or renovator for the names of other people they have worked for, so you can call those people and ask them if the work was done well. You can also check the Better Business Bureau (the number is in the phone book) to see if the company is listed with them. If so, you can find out if there are any complaints against it. This will not tell you for sure if the company is good, but it may help.



The builder or renovator will need some money to start the work. But make sure you keep one final payment for the end of the job. Do not pay it until you know all the work has been done well and is finished.

## **Handy workers**

You may need workers after you have been in the home for some time, just to fix up things and do some

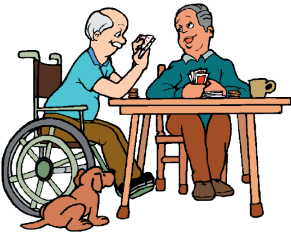


little repairs. It is always a good idea to know the name of a good plumber and someone to help you fix the stove or fridge. If you hear about a good worker, keep the name of that person so you will know who to call when you need help.



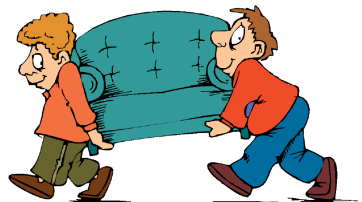
## Occupational therapist (sounds like *oc-u-PAY-shon-al THAIR-a-pist*)

These therapists do not give you exercises. But they can tell your builder or renovator how to make your home comfortable. Not everyone needs this person, but if you have a disability, it is really important to know that your home will be accessible (easy to get around) and you can do things for yourself. You may need to have many things changed. You may need lower work tops in the kitchen, so you can sit down to work. You may need grab bars beside the bath, so you can get in and out. These are just 2 of the things that the therapist may say you need.



## Movers

Unless you plan to move all your things yourself, or you have friends and family to help, you will need a moving company. Do the same here as for the builder — ask people



you know if there are movers they think are good. Get the company to give you a written paper which says how much the move will cost. You can ask more than one company before you choose the one you think will be best. It is a good idea to take out a small insurance just for the move, in case your things get broken. Your home insurance will not cover damage that happens outside your home.

Now you have your team. All these people are there to help you. You do not need to feel you are all alone in the big job of buying a home.



## What the words mean

**Appraiser** (sounds like *ap-RAY-zer*). Someone trained to look at your home and say what it is worth. You must pay an *appraisal fee* for this service.

**Home inspector.** Someone trained to look all over a home to say if anything needs to be fixed.

**Insurance.** Money you pay to a company so that if you have a big problem it will help you out. There are different kinds of insurance.

- a) *Property insurance.* It covers the cost of your things and also your home. If you have a fire or a

flood, or a burglar breaks in and steals things, you can get insurance money to repair or replace what is damaged or lost.

- b) *Mortgage insurance*. If you borrow more than three quarters (3/4) of the money you need for your home, the lender will want you to pay this. The insurance will pay the lender (not you) if you cannot make your payments and lose your home.
- c) *Life insurance*. If you die before you have paid all your mortgage, life insurance will pay off the rest of your debt.

**Lender.** The company which lends you the mortgage you need to buy a home. It may be a bank, a credit union, an insurance company or some other big company.

**Mortgage** (sounds like *MOR-gaje*). The money you borrow from a bank or other lending company to buy your home.

**Mortgage broker.** A person who helps you find the best mortgage.

**REALTOR.** A REALTOR is a real estate agent (someone trained to help you buy or sell your home). REALTORS are members of the Canadian Real Estate Association and follow the rules of the association. They can find information for you about many homes. (REALTOR is always written this way.)

**Renovator.** A builder who can fix up walls, windows and such like if they are in poor condition.

**Vendor.** The home seller.

Here is a list of the booklets which  
may help you buy a home:

- **The first steps when you buy a home**
- **Mortgages and other money matters**
- **What to check when you buy a home**
- **Your home-buying team**
- **Make an offer to buy a home**
- **When it is time to move...**

These booklets are for general information only.  
They do not take the place of professional help.

You will still need to talk to  
a REALTOR (this is a real estate agent), a lawyer, and a lender.

You can get copies of these booklets at:

The Home Program  
c/o CTD Housing Solutions Edmonton Ltd.  
10242 105 Street NW, 6th Floor  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3L5

phone: (780) 504-6161

fax: (780) 471-6831

email: [homeownership@thehomeprogram.ca](mailto:homeownership@thehomeprogram.ca)

website: [www.homeprogram.ca](http://www.homeprogram.ca)

This booklet is one of a series produced for  
the Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and  
the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities.  
Funding from the Calgary Region Community Board,  
Persons with Developmental Disabilities  
(Community Capacity Initiatives Fund)  
is gratefully acknowledged.