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I. INTRODUCTION TO SELLING YOUR HOME

Are you thinking about selling your home but wondering if the right time is NOW? To help you determine if it is, I have used my 10+ years of real estate experience, to put together a guide to walk you through the steps of selling your property and give you the tools you need to make this important decision.

First of all, you need to know that local market conditions that will have the most impact on the amount of money you can get for your property – and how quickly you can sell it. You may put a price on your home, but the market is what really prices it. I know your neighbourhood, what Buyers want in a home, how to negotiate the best price and how to close the deal for you. Together, we can make the sale of your property easy and worry-free – and it all begins with you!

II. DETERMINING A PRICE

The market sets the price, it is a simple law of supply and demand. It is very important to set the right price for your home, so that it sells for the maximum value, in the shortest period of time. A simple way to explain is “if you get no offers on a house, the price is too high. If you get one offer for your house, the price was just right. If you get multiple offers for your house, the price was under value.” The key is to get offers, even if the offer is a bad one, it is still an opportunity to negotiate. You can't sell your house without an offer.

Where my expertise comes in, is in the comprehensive analysis of what comparable/similar/competitive homes have recently sold for in your neighbourhood, weighing that with your home's unique features. This process is known as a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) and it is generally considered the most effective method of determining what potential Buyers will be willing to pay for your home.

The CMA is divided into three categories:

1. Similar properties that have recently SOLD: By studying these, we can see what homeowners have actually received for their properties over the last few months.
2. Similar properties that have currently been LISTED: These properties show exactly what alternatives a serious buyer has to choose from.
3. EXPIRED LISTINGS were listed and did not sell. You can learn from their mistakes as they could be as a result of overpricing or other factors like location, layout, poor marketing etc.

By carefully studying the comparable property locations, features and terms, we can develop a clear picture of the potential market value for your property. This is a similar process that banks and lending institutions use in determining how much they will be willing to lend you for your home.

In addition to the CMA, I will help you develop a competitive price based on other key factors such as:

- Location
- Size
- Style
- Condition
- Community amenities
- Market conditions

Listing your property at market value is essential to a successful sale because Buyers will not be looking at either overpriced or underpriced homes. Most Buyers working with Realtors® receive property listings from their Realtor® via email, who is searching for them within the parameters of their needs. If the buyer's budget for a home is \$800,000, they are likely only looking at homes priced from \$750,000-\$850,000. You want your property to be seen by the Buyers who want a property like yours.

Another important factor to determining the correct price is that your home will lose its "marketability" after sitting too long on the market. There may be nothing wrong with your home, other than an unrealistic price, but it will eventually develop a stigma. Buyers will forget all about the overpriced home they saw weeks earlier; Realtors® searching on behalf of new clients will see the DOM (days on market) and wonder what is wrong with the property and why it has not sold yet. When they look at the previous selling price(s) and comparable properties they may not be willing to present your home enthusiastically to their clients if they feel it is not priced correctly.

You will attract more interest on your home if it is priced realistically and Buyers will most likely bring their best offer if they really want your home.

Most Buyers take between 2 and 6 weeks to build confidence and collect information about prevailing market conditions before making their first offer. By the time a typical Buyer is ready to make an offer, they will have seen all of the existing properties for sale in your neighbourhood and will only be waiting to see new listings as they arrive on the market.

This means the first few weeks after listing are the most critical since the number of prepared Buyers who will see your home will be at its peak. As a result, many vendors often come to realize that the first offer is usually the best offer. Listen to your agent's advice and price right from the beginning.

III. LISTING YOUR PROPERTY

Once you have decided to list your property for sale, you can count on me to:

- Put your home on the market in a timely manner.
- Take care of all the paperwork and organize all the details, Professional photos and extensive marketing.
- Advise you about your legal rights, sale options and obligations.

- Check in with you frequently to advise you on what is happening behind the scenes, provide feedback from showings and keep you updated on what is being done on an ongoing basis to actively market your property.
- Negotiate offers to get you the best price and the best terms.
- Clearly spell out the rights and obligations of all parties, the length of the agreement, and the compensation (commission rate).
- Set the listing price.
- Accurately describe the property (including lot size, building size, style and materials, floor areas, heating/cooling systems, room sizes and descriptions)
- Detail what is, and what is not, included in the sale. As a general rule, fixtures are included; chattels, things which are movable, are not, but each transaction is unique, so take some time to decide what you would like to do.
- Provide information about annual property taxes, and note any easements, rights of way, liens or charges against the property.
- Plan or survey showing the lot size, location of buildings and any encroachments from neighbouring properties. You should hopefully have this from when you bought your property.
- Property tax receipts.
- Mortgage verification.
- Website Marketing
- Thorough, accurate MLS listing with pictures, text and details.
- Full-colour feature sheets that are offered to all prospective Buyers.
- Professional photography capturing your home in its best light.
- High profile For Sale sign for freehold homes.
- online social networking and marketing automation techniques.
- Just Listed cards mailed to the neighbourhood.
- Local newspaper ads for open houses when required
- Advise on home improvement suggestions, also a pre-sale home inspection if beneficial
- Turn on all the lights, even during the day, and open all the drapes and blinds.

IV. PREPARING TO SELL YOUR HOME

Buyers sometimes place a lot of emphasis on a property's presentation. First time Buyers can be especially concerned with making such a big purchase and they want everything to be – or at least, to look – perfect.

Your home's exterior is the first thing potential Buyers are going to see, and if it is dilapidated, it may turn them off before they even see the inside. First impressions, also known as "curb appeal", definitely count for a lot!

Here are some things you can do to improve the look of your home's exterior:

- Trim the shrubs.
- Mow the lawn.
- Remove dead tree limbs and other yard debris.

- Brighten up the garden with fresh shrubs or flowers.
- Remove clutter like stray toys and gardening equipment.
- Touch up peeling paint on doors, siding and trim.
- Repair and/or paint any fencing.
- Fix damaged roof shingles and flashing.
- Clean outside windows and fix torn screens.
- Clean gutters and downspouts.
- Clear the driveway and sidewalk.
- Tidy up the garage and shed.
- Ensure outside lights and doorbells work.

Here are some simple things you can do to improve the look your home's interior:

- Wash walls, ceilings and trim.
- Every room should look as spacious, bright and warm as possible.
- Tighten loose knobs, towel racks, switch plates and outlet covers.
- Fix tight doors and windows, squeaky floorboards and loose stair banisters.
- Clean and repair caulking around tubs and sinks.
- Fix leaky faucets; remove water stains.
- Clean and organize the basement and attic. (This is a good time to throw out all the stuff you do not want to move.)
- Organize your closets. Get rid of the clutter and limit the number of items stored overhead or on the floor.
- Clean out kitchen cabinets and remove clutter from countertops.
- Shampoo carpets and polish floors.
- Arrange furniture to make rooms appear as spacious as possible.

Along with the cosmetic issues, you can also do some renovating to increase your property's value.

According to Canadian surveys, the top three renovations that return the best increase on your investment are:

1. Bathrooms (75 to 100% return)
2. Kitchens (75 to 100% return)
3. Interior and exterior painting (50 to 100% return)

These renovations would be the top recommendations for return on investment for your home:

- Replacing roof shingles (50% to 80%)
- Replacing the furnace and heating system (50% to 80%)
- Renovating the basement (50% to 75%)
- Up-grading floors (50 to 75%)
- Replacing windows and doors (50 to 75%)
- Installing central air conditioning (25 to 75%)

Keep in mind though, that not every home needs to be renovated or updated for a successful sale.

Some Buyers like to do their own home renovations, and are looking for a "blank canvas" to work with.

- Kitchen counters and cupboards.
- Bathroom counters, shelves and cupboards.
- Closets.

- Surfaces like coffee tables, desks, window ledges, any open shelving.
Surveys of Canadian homebuyers suggest that Buyers are willing to spend time and money decorating to their tastes once they have moved in, so there is little need to purchase expensive décor that the Buyers may just eliminate later.
The best times to consider staging and decorating are:
- When the home is very dated, to the point that existing furniture detracts from the home itself.
- When an investment property has been tenanted and the common areas are poorly maintained (if the tenants consent to having their space changed temporarily of course).
- When the property is vacant. Just as clutter can overwhelm potential buyers, so can total emptiness – it can be hard to get a good idea of room sizes without furniture to show what will fit inside. This is especially true of smaller condo units where furniture can provide a frame of reference, showing what you can do with the space.

V. OFFER TO PURCHASE

Here are some elements in an offer you receive:

- The **closing date**. This is the big day to plan around. It is helpful if you can move in to your new home a day or two before your closing date to minimize your stress and also avoid conflicts with the Buyer's schedule.
- The **Deposit** amount. How much money is the buyer putting down with the offer to purchase. This can suggest how financially secure a buyer may be and whether there will be any issues with getting financing.
- The **contract requisition date** (also known as the Title Search date). This is the last day by which the Buyer's lawyer has to search the title of the property to ensure that everything is in order. If there are concerns they will need to be addressed prior to this date.
- **Access visits** – the Buyer (accompanied by their agent) may be entitled to see the house again before closing at mutually agreeable times – the specifics will be on a Schedule forming part of the offer. You will have to agree to these dates and times and you can reject them within reason if they conflict with your schedule – we aim to get as much advance notice as possible.
- **Appraisal** – An appointment may be made by the Buyer's bank or mortgage broker to appraise the home. This is usually a very quick 15-minute interior/exterior walk-through of your home. Usually very little notice is given for these appointments, but the appointment desk will inform you of the Appraiser's intent to inspect as soon as the request is received.
- **Condition on Financing/home inspection**- The buyer will usually require a condition on the offer to ensure that the banks will give them a mortgage for the agreed offer price. Home inspection is another condition that may be required. The buyer would want a professional to give a health check on your home

VI. CLOSING THE SALE

I always encourage my clients to stay on good terms with the people who bought their home. Though the Buyers are legally obligated to close the deal, it is always nice to have a good relationship with them – what goes around, comes around! This can mean being as flexible as possible when the Buyers are arranging their access visits; being willing to consider Buyers' offers to purchase some of your furniture and decor not included in the offer; and getting back to me in a timely manner so I can respond to any of the Buyers' requests.

Here is a list of some more simple things you can do to make this a great experience for the Buyers:

- The most important thing is to leave your home in a broom swept condition. Many agents will even put this into the offer because sometimes people move out and leave a mess behind. Please plan ahead to have your home cleaned out before the Buyers move in. Some often-overlooked areas are closets, backyards, crawlspaces, garages and yes, the fridge!
- On a practical note, the Buyers will definitely need things like your old **warranty papers** (for your roof, heating/cooling system, appliances etc.) and **contracts or receipts** for work or services done on the property by you or by contractors within the last five years. These papers are typically left on the kitchen counter.
- Other items to leave for the Buyers include **extra keys** to doors, outside storage buildings, crawl spaces etc., **garage door openers** (if applicable) and the security **alarm code** if you have kept the alarm system going for them to assume when you leave.
- In addition to reviewing your offer and preparing legal documents, your lawyer will also meet with you on closing day to fully execute all the documentation, receive your keys to hand over to the Buyer's lawyer, and also carry out the exchange of documents and monies. Here are twelve things that your lawyer will do for you:
 - Receive instructions from you about the sale of your property and discharge of your existing mortgage.
 - Review the executed offer.
 - Review and respond to the requests submitted by the Buyers' lawyer.
 - Prepare the Statement of Adjustments.
 - Prepare the draft of the Transfer/Deed.
 - Prepare all supporting sale documents.
 - Forward a request for a mortgage discharge statement for any mortgages registered on title.
 - Meet with you to execute all sale documentation and get your keys on closing.
 - Attend to the closing and effect the exchange of documents & monies.
 - Go to the registry office to discharge the executed Charge/Mortgage.
 - Deliver the balance of the sale proceeds (if any) to the real estate office.
 - Conduct all necessary correspondence and telephone conversations with any parties involved in this sale.

In order to help expedite the process, below is a list of some items your lawyer may ask for:

- The property Survey if available.
- Your Deed or Transfer of Land document.
- If you are selling a condo unit, the address & phone number of the Condominium Corporation.
- The keys to the property.
- The Agreement of Purchase and Sale (I will send this from my office to your lawyer).

- The correct spelling of your name(s), your address and telephone number.
- Your forwarding address, if known.
- Contact information for the Buyer's lawyer (I will send this from my office to your lawyer).
- Your bank, financing & mortgage information (Mortgage reference number).
- Power of Attorney, if applicable.
- Copies of your most recent: property tax bill, water bill, cable bill, electricity bill, gas bill. NOTE: If home is oil-heated, you will be required to fill the tank as of closing date (you will be credited for this on the closing adjustments).

When you are selling your home, closing day is a little different than when you are buying. As a Seller, you should have met with your lawyer a couple of days prior to closing. At this meeting you will sign off the mortgage, the legal papers, and give a set of keys to your lawyer for the Buyers.

You will be notified by your lawyer when the property is officially closed. They will advise you when that the money and keys have changed hands, and the Buyers are registered on title.

VII. ABOUT ME

My name is Francesca Belle, I have been a licensed Realtor since 2006.

My goal is to make the buying and selling process as easy as possible for my clients. What I value most is ensuring that my clients make the right decision for them and their families. I give my clients all my knowledge and experience to help them with their decisions. I promote honesty, loyalty, and open communication.

I became a Realtor because I wanted to work for myself and answer only to my clients. Working with people and helping them with their most valuable asset is a thrill for me.

The most exciting part of Real Estate is showing the perfect home to my clients. When I am able to interpret their list of wants and find them a home that fits what they need and within their price range.

I understand the importance of building a happy home. I have 3 children and our home is where we spend our special time together. It is important to have the right affordable home for your family!