

*first-time*  
**HOME BUYERS** 2010

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**SUN** NEW HOMES & CONDOS



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# A positive experience

Few things as enticing as the prospect of a new home

**DIANNE DANIEL**

Special to QMI Agency

There's something about walking through a crisp, clean model home on a beautiful spring day that brings out the buyer in most of us. But no matter how enticing the prospect of a brand new home may seem, there's a lot to think about before signing on the dotted line, especially for first-time owners.

For starters, it's important to know what you can afford. Experts recommend that total housing costs, including mortgage, taxes, insurance and condo fees, should be no more than 25 to 30% of your total income. It's also important to set aside a small fund for the extras that don't always come with a new home such as window treatments, landscaping, appliances, decks or patios.

Once you have a price in mind, the next step is to create a list of likes and dislikes. This list will help you to rank the various developments you visit and will keep your emotions in check when you find yourself overwhelmed by models designed to show every possible feature and upgrade combination.

Even though builders provide their own real estate agents, it's a good idea to hire your own. The agents on-site at the model home are being paid to represent the builder and aren't likely to openly discuss drawbacks. In fact, they often do just the opposite, staging furniture in a way that hides small flaws and highlights best features.

Try to select a realtor who has already completed a number of new home transactions and has an established relationship with your homebuilder.

One of the most important steps when buying a new home is to do your research, not only about the reputation of your builder, but also about the city plans for your neighbourhood. You can start by checking public records for lawsuits against your builder, talking to other homeowners about the construction quality of their homes, and investigating whether or not your builder sells to investors — if homes aren't required to be owner occupied you may find yourself surrounded by rentals. In new developments, you should look at future city plans for roads, greenspace, schools, amenities, zoning and transportation.

Before signing a purchase contract you will need to hire a real estate lawyer to walk you through the wording. It's important to understand your liability and obligations, as well as those of your builder. Sometimes builders will express the need for urgency in order to secure a specific location or unit, so you may need to rely solely on the expertise of your realtor. Nevertheless, it's usually better to walk away than to sign something you're not sure about.

When it comes time to arrange financing for your new home, most builders encourage one-stop shopping by providing incentives tied directly to the use of their own lender. However, if you're not care-



In the spring, Tatiana Orlova and her daughter Margarita Pavluk lined up for the opportunity to purchase condo townhomes at Daniels at Eglinton West. "My daughter and her husband are first-time buyers, and the location and quality for the price were so great that I decided to buy a townhome. It was well worth it," Tatiana says.

ful, you could end up paying higher interest rates and higher closing costs. Before agreeing to anything, you should check with your own financial institution as well as alternative lenders recommended by your realtor.

Finally, no matter how well qualified they are, construction workers can make mistakes. Regardless of the warranty that comes with your new home, you will need to hire a licensed home inspector to go over everything with a fine-toothed comb to ensure everything is up to standard.

Buying your first home doesn't have to be a dream come true, but it shouldn't be a nightmare either. By following these simple steps, you can avoid the common mistakes of many first-time buyers and increase the odds that your first experience will be a positive one.



Andrzej Kardys cares about the environment, and his home. Recently, he took a walk through Regent Park to see what was being done to revitalize the area, including the OneCole Condo project, from whom he purchased.

## On the cover

### LAURA MORTON AND IAN EVINOU

This summer, Laura Morton and Ian Evinou's most productive camping trip took place in the heart of Erin Mills at Daniels Eglinton West, where they lined up to become homeowners.

"We live in Burlington with Ian's parents, and we never dreamed we'd be able to afford a home in Mississauga, which is where I work," says Laura, who is an administrative clerk and freelances as a make-up artist. "We bought the corner model with three bedrooms. We have an 8-month-old son, Brody, and we'll use the third bedroom as an office. We're so happy."

