

# Cherri and Sandra's

## News You Can Use

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### Signs of Optimism in Fraser Valley Real Estate Market

*FVREB News Release, April 2, 2009*

Fraser Valley REALTORS® credit first-time homebuyers, low interest rates and greater overall confidence in the housing market for an increase in sales on the Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®) in March.

The Fraser Valley Real Estate Board reports 1,006 sales were processed in March, reflecting a 24 per cent decrease compared to the 1,315 sales in March of last year, however, a 48 per cent jump from February's 682 sales. March is the first month to surpass one thousand sales in the Fraser Valley since July of last year, reflecting more typical March sales totals last seen in the early 2000s.

Paul Penner, President of the Board, confirms real estate activity has picked up. "REALTORS® are seeing the return of first-time home buyers who have been waiting in the wings for the last few months, and homeowners responding to the opportunity to buy-up by moving from a condo to a townhome or a townhome to a detached house. Homes with a lower price-point are attracting more attention. "With current interest rates and price reductions, buyers are looking at monthly costs that are 20 per cent less than they were a year ago. In Fraser Valley, that's a \$780 per month savings on a mortgage for an average detached home."

Property selection continues to moderate from the record levels of over 12,000 active listings reached in September 2008. The Board received 7 per cent fewer new listings in March compared to the same month last year, taking the total number of active listings to 9,832.

Residential benchmark prices, the value of a 'typical' Fraser Valley detached home as determined by the MLSLink® Housing Price Index (HPI), decreased 10.6 per cent compared to March 2008, however, increased slightly, 0.7 per cent, for the second consecutive month. As well, detached homes sold on average, 10 days faster in March than they did in February.

#### Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, we'll be able to help. Just give either Cherri or Sandra a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation. We won't try to push you into listing with us or waste your time. We'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

April 2009

### Don't Make These 4 Home Seller's Blunders

Learn how to obtain the best price and avoid the headaches and heartaches associated with selling a home by avoiding these top four mistakes most people make:

#### 1. Pricing

Without a doubt the single biggest mistake most people make when selling a home is not pricing right. Price too low and people are likely to ignore the home because they think it has major flaws; price too high and it is likely to sit on the market so long people lose interest. Work with an agent to price right as soon as the house goes on the market.

#### 2. Maintenance

Failure to make small repairs, paint and properly maintain the property can result in a lower selling price, longer duration on the market and just plain lack of interest. Remember, first impressions matter. Most people will begin their search online then take a drive by the home before scheduling an appointment to see more. Make sure your home looks its best at all times.

#### 3. Cutting Commission

While it might seem smart to reduce commission or even try to sell a home yourself, it's usually "penny wise and pound foolish." Remember, a lot of the commission goes to the agent/broker who brings a buyer to the table...less commission equates to fewer people working on your behalf to get the home sold.



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## How the Seasons Affect the Real Estate Market

Falling home prices, slow housing starts, rising unemployment ... buyers searching for a new home will do well to remember how seasons are likely to impact real estate. Learn how to obtain the best price while making seasonal variations and weather trends work for you with these quick tips:

**Always view homes in person.** Although a picture may be worth a thousand words, there are times when a photo can actually lead you astray; overgrown bushes could be hiding a diamond in the rough, while a snow-laden landscape may not show the true beauty and charm of a potential property. Assuming all things are equal, take time to visit a property in person before making a final decision.

**Shop during the "off" times.** Motivated sellers may need a fast sale due to job transfers or other family situations; unfortunately, they aren't always able to take advantage of perfect timing. Harsh weather, holidays and other "off" times often result in fewer people looking for properties. Offer fast closing times and other negotiation strategies for a win-win situation.

**Purchase extra protection.** Seasonal variations can give misleading inspection results if you aren't careful. Always take the time to obtain a professional inspection and pay close attention to "off season" items. For example, in the middle of winter it's easy to discover heating-related problems but don't forget to have the HVAC system checked too. Other common seasonal culprits include pools, irrigation systems, fireplaces and windows. An appraisal is an inexpensive way to guard against seasonal real estate related problems.

## The Amazing Power of Berries

Searching for a powerful way to reduce the risk of cancer, fight disease, improve memory and prevent age-related eye disorders? Pick up a pint of berries on your next trip to the grocery store.

A growing body of evidences supports eating blackberries, blueberries, elderberries, raspberries and even strawberries as a way to reduce the risk of disease and fight many common symptoms associated with certain diseases. Fresh berries are most effective for therapeutic use; frozen are next best.

For those unable to obtain berries on a daily basis, try adding a berry extract to your diet. Not only do berries contain necessary antioxidants like vitamins A,C,E and folic acid; they also contain anthocyanins, compounds capable of fighting tumour growth and aiding the body's natural defences.

Adding berries to your diet is a simple way to fight disease and satisfy a sweet tooth at the same time.

## How to Protect Yourself Against Identify Theft

Research indicates identity theft is on the rise despite continued efforts to keep data secure and crack down on offenders. Big business and government can't stop the problem alone – it requires the diligence and effort of every citizen to remain vigilant.

Learn how to protect yourself against identity theft with these simple steps:

**Double-Check.** If you receive an unsolicited phone call, email or other correspondence, do not provide personal information; instead, ask for a phone number and name so you can call back, then verify that the information is the same as that provided on your billing statement or other contact information. Sophisticated scammers are able to mimic email, websites and even toll-free call-back numbers so that they can entice unsuspecting consumers to provide information.

**Manage Passwords.** Always use encryption when doing online banking or shopping or otherwise providing delicate information, and take the time to change account passwords frequently. Remember, never share your user names or passwords with others and create unique ones for each individual online presence.

**Alerts!** Use email alerts to notify you of unexpected withdrawals or large account transactions on banking or credit cards. It allows you to stay alert to potential fraudulent activity on your account.

**Wireless Warnings.** Although wireless hot spots in cafes and the like are convenient, they are a security nightmare. Avoid banking or conducting sensitive business via a wireless network. Instead, wait until you are in a more secure location or use additional encryption if necessary.



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