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Buying a home is not something to rush into; neither is selling. Yet, even after the latest slowdown in the pace of sales, there may be times when you will lose if you snooze.

So learn how to protect yourself for a bidding war, fence fight or missing fixtures. Learn how to avoid a fraud charge, a buried oil tank, paying for conflicted advice or a costly trip to court and punitive damages.

A book by Mark Weisleder – *Put the Pen Down! What Homebuyers and Sellers Need to Know Before Signing On The Dotted Line* – will prepare you well for closing day, and the day after.

The veteran real estate lawyer and instructor adapted two other books he wrote for real estate agents to suit the owners and buyers who pay for their services. He has packed in a wealth of information.

Careful readers could be so well prepared they could take some agents to task.

Take the case of an elderly aunt and uncle of mine. They were preparing to sell the bungalow where they had lived for many years and were shopping for a resale condominium apartment.

When their agent showed them a suite in an attractive building, my aunt asked about hiring a home inspector. “Why?” the agent asked. “It’s a condominium.”

Shame on that agent! Weisleder argues you should pay for an inspection to avoid surprises.

A qualified inspector could assess the condition of appliances, countertops, plumbing fixtures and other items so the buyer could make a more informed decision about the asking price.

More importantly, an inspector could gauge the condition of the building’s heating, ventilation and air condition system, the roof and the garage. He or she could look into the building status certificate, condo association reserve fund, bylaws and rules, if the buyer knew to include this in the offer of purchase.

Weisleder devotes an entire chapter to condominium and co-operative housing in his 359-page book from ECW Press. He repeats some information from earlier chapters in case you skip them.

But the other chapters are also important. He notes in the chapter on preparing to sell or buy a home that most home inspection reports come with a limited liability clause. That means you could get back the cost of the report, but not the cost of repairing something the inspector missed.

Much of Weisleder’s book is devoted to explaining the deeper meaning of documents you will be asked to sign. For example, he explains why it’s not a good idea to agree to deal with an agent who will act for both the buyer and the seller.

You could save on sales commission, but may not get the best sale price. The agent will be duty bound not to share information with you that he or she gleans from the party on the other side of the deal.

Weisleder discusses the many services an agent devoted exclusively to your interests can provide, such as gauging market conditions,



A house for sale in the Beach area of Toronto.

DAVID COOPER/TORONTO STAR

neighbourhoods and homes and providing referrals to other professionals.

He also has tips on research, preparation and double-checking you should do, like making sure you will qualify for a mortgage and get home insurance at a reasonable premium.

Special care is required if you would hope to divide a property or replace a home with something quite different. A previous landowner may have signed a covenant that would also apply to future owners that would prevent you from replacing a single-family home with a triplex, Weisleder warns.

There are also potential problems that arise when dealing with a divorced couple, the executor of an estate, a property in cottage country or, worst of all, a dishonest buyer or seller.

Weisleder deals with them all. His book was published late last year. But you could join me Sunday at 1:45 p.m. to hear him speak and answer questions during the *Word On The Street Book and Magazine Festival* at Queen's Park.

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