A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE HOME-BUYING PROCESS IN WINNIPEG AND MANITOBA

# Manitoba Home Buyer Guide

From first viewing to possession - know what happens, what it costs, and what to confirm.

Buying a home involves more than choosing a property and agreeing on a price. You need to plan the money, understand the offer, investigate the property, meet deadlines, and prepare for closing.

This guide explains the key decisions, documents, costs, and professionals involved at each stage - so you can move forward with fewer surprises.

## The Buying Process

01 **Plan your budget**

Understand your down payment, deposit, land transfer tax, legal fees, inspections, insurance, moving costs, closing adjustments, and the reserve you want to retain after possession.

02 **Arrange financing**

A pre-approval is a starting point, not a final commitment. Confirm your lender's requirements, property approval, appraisal, down-payment documentation, and final funding timeline.

03 **Prepare the offer**

Decide on price, deposit, possession date, included items, conditions, deadlines, and the protections you need before becoming fully committed.

04 **Complete due diligence**

Use inspections, documents, permits, specialist advice, lender feedback, insurance confirmation, and legal review to understand the property and remaining risks.

05 **Close and take possession**

Coordinate final funds, insurance, legal documents, utilities, walkthrough arrangements, and key release.

> A SIMPLE RULE FOR EVERY STAGE
>
> **Know what is confirmed, what remains uncertain, who is responsible for verifying it, and what deadline applies.**

## My Role

I help organize the process, compare local sales, identify practical questions, coordinate follow-up, negotiate the offer, and keep the agreed steps moving. My construction and renovation experience helps put visible conditions into context, while lenders, lawyers, inspectors, insurers, and other qualified professionals confirm matters within their own expertise.



*The detailed guide, decision worksheet, and source notes begin on the next page.*

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01 WHERE I AM USEFUL

# A practical advocate through the purchase

My role is to help you ask better questions, compare the answers and make an informed offer.

| Stage | How I help |
|---|---|
| **Plan the search** | Clarify your must-haves, preferred locations, timing and budget range. Identify trade-offs before we tour homes. |
| **Evaluate a home** | Look beyond fresh finishes. Flag visible issues and ask about repairs, permits, water history and future use. |
| **Prepare an offer** | Review comparable sales, discuss a price range and negotiate price, possession, included items and appropriate conditions. |
| **Investigate** | Request records, organize outstanding questions and coordinate access and follow-up with your chosen professionals. |
| **Make the decision** | Bring inspection findings, quotes, lender feedback and documents back to the price and terms. Discuss options when a question remains unresolved. |
| **Prepare to close** | Track the agreed transaction steps, help coordinate communications and arrange a walkthrough where the agreement allows it. |

## Who verifies what

Your lender confirms financing and property requirements. Your lawyer advises on the agreement, title, rights and closing. An inspector assesses within the inspection scope; an engineer or other specialist investigates concerns needing that expertise. Your insurer confirms coverage and conditions.

Before we work together, we clarify whom the brokerage represents, the services and any remuneration obligations. Dealing with a listing agent does not automatically make that person your representative.[9]

> YOUR DECISION
>
> I help organize evidence and negotiate on your behalf within our representation agreement. You choose whether the home, price and remaining risks fit your plans. My construction background adds practical context; it does not replace a professional inspection or engineering assessment.

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02 UNDERSTAND THE CASH TIMELINE

# How much money do I need and when

A deposit is usually credited toward the purchase price. Do not automatically count it on top of your total down payment.

Illustrative CAD example: a $500,000 resale house, a $100,000 total down payment and a $15,000 deposit credited at closing. The remaining down payment is $85,000. Deposit timing and treatment must match the agreement. [8]

| Amount to plan for | Illustrative amount |
|---|---|
| **Total down payment including the deposit** | $100,000 |
| **Land transfer tax at $500,000 fair market value** | $7,650 |
| **Legal registration and disbursement allowance** | $2,500 |
| **Inspection allowance** | $600 |
| **Closing-adjustment allowance** | $1,500 |
| **Property-insurance allowance** | $750 |
| **Moving allowance** | $1,000 |
| **Emergency reserve retained after purchase** | $10,000 |
| **Total funds allocated in this example** | $124,000 |

The tax follows Manitoba's published brackets; registration fees are separate. Other amounts are budget placeholders, not local quotes. This example assumes no mortgage-insurance premium or additional lender charges. Obtain actual figures and include applicable taxes and fees. [5]

## Three moments when you need money

**With or after the offer:** the agreed deposit and early investigation costs. **Before possession:** the lawyer's requested funds, remaining down payment and closing costs. **After possession:** moving, bills, maintenance and an accessible reserve. In this example, the remaining down payment, tax, legal allowance and adjustment allowance are due at closing before any other actual items.

> HOW I HELP
>
> I help build the property-specific cost list and identify missing figures. Your lender and lawyer confirm the amounts, funding sources and deadlines before you commit.

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03 FINANCING AND FIRST TIME BUYER QUESTIONS

# Pre approval is a starting point

The amount you qualify to borrow and the amount you can comfortably spend are different decisions.

A mortgage pre-approval does not guarantee the final loan. Ask what remains conditional, whether the property and appraisal are acceptable, and what funds or documents are still needed. Tell the lender before changing employment, taking on debt or moving down-payment funds. Obtain confirmation before relying on a financing condition being satisfied. [1]

## Which mortgage questions matter beyond the rate

**Term** is the period your current mortgage contract lasts. **Amortization** is the planned repayment period. Compare fixed and variable arrangements, payment-change rules, prepayment privileges, penalties, portability and all fees with the lender or mortgage broker. [2]

## Can I use first time buyer programs

A **First Home Savings Account (FHSA)** has eligibility and qualifying-withdrawal conditions. Participation room begins when an account is opened. Ask your provider about your available room, withdrawal paperwork and how funds will reach the lawyer. [6]

The **Home Buyers' Plan** can allow qualifying withdrawals from a **registered retirement savings plan (RRSP)**. The current withdrawal limit is $60,000; repayment rules and timing depend on your circumstances and withdrawal year. It can be combined with a qualifying First Home Savings Account withdrawal when all conditions are met. [7]

## What can I really carry each month

Budget mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance, heating, electricity, water, services and maintenance. Add commuting, household spending and near-term repairs. Stress-test a higher payment or temporary income reduction with your financial advisor. A minimum down payment does not mean minimum ownership cost.

> HOW I HELP
>
> I keep the home search aligned with the budget you choose and flag property features that may affect costs or financing. The lender confirms approval; you and your financial advisor decide the affordable limit.

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04 OFFER DECISIONS

# What should I offer and what protects me

An asking price is a marketing choice. The offer should reflect the property, comparable sales and your own ceiling.

## How much above asking is reasonable

There is no reliable amount that fits every Winnipeg home. Compare recent sold properties with similar location, size, lot, condition, parking and legal use. Adjust for meaningful differences and current competition. Set a ceiling before the pressure of an offer date. Ask the lender what happens if the appraisal is below the agreed price.

## What belongs in the offer

- ☐ Price, deposit amount and due date; possession and included or excluded items.
- ☐ Appropriate financing, inspection, document-review and property-specific conditions.
- ☐ Precise deadlines, responsibilities and any agreed repair or access arrangements.
- ☐ An offer expiry that leaves you comfortable with the decision being made.

## When am I committed and can I change my mind

Understand acceptance before signing. The Manitoba house form sets out conditions, notices, deposits and default consequences. Returning a deposit after an unfulfilled condition depends on the contract and compliance with its requirements. Buyer default can create exposure beyond the deposit. Have your lawyer explain the actual terms. [8]

Do not assume a house has the same statutory cooling-off protection as a condominium. A request to change price or extend a deadline needs agreement; an inspection finding does not automatically rewrite the contract.

> HOW I HELP
>
> I explain the commercial choices, prepare and present the offer, negotiate terms and track the agreed steps. When an issue affects legal rights, I bring your lawyer into the discussion rather than assuming a standard answer.

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05 INSPECTION CHOICES

# How can I inspect in a competitive market

Know what has been investigated before deciding which conditions you are comfortable offering.

| Choice | Useful when | Limit or trade off |
|---|---|---|
| **Inspect before offering** | Access and enough time are available before an offer date. | You may pay for an inspection and not buy the home. Confirm scope and access; other conditions remain separate. |
| **Offer with an inspection condition** | The seller accepts a suitable condition and investigation period. | Book promptly. Understand the wording, deadline, notice requirements and available options. |
| **Proceed without inspection** | You knowingly accept a larger information gap. | Fresh finishes, a quick showing or a seller's report do not replace your own suitable investigation. |

## What should I ask an inspector

Ask about qualifications, insurance, scope, report timing and exclusions. Identify areas that cannot be accessed, tested or seen. Ask which findings need a specialist and which items are routine maintenance. An inspection is not a guarantee of every concealed condition or future performance.

## What happens when the report finds a problem

Separate urgent safety concerns, significant unknown costs and ordinary wear. Obtain the right specialist opinion or quote. Depending on the agreement, discuss proceeding, requesting a change, seeking an extension or exercising an available contractual right. Record what remains unknown before making the decision.

> HOW I HELP
>
> I coordinate access and follow-up, help turn report findings into a list of decisions, and negotiate proposed changes. The inspector or specialist provides the technical assessment; your lawyer confirms the legal options.

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06 EVALUATE THE HOUSE IN FOUR PASSES

# Look beyond the finishes

The same questions apply whether the house is newly decorated or visibly dated.

| Pass | What to ask |
|---|---|
| **Physical condition** | Where can water travel? What shows movement or recurring repair? Which systems are old, untested or inaccessible? |
| **Ownership cost** | What will heating, insurance, property taxes and services cost? Which repairs or replacements may be needed soon? |
| **Documents and rights** | What proves approved work, title rights, legal access, intended uses and transferable warranties? |
| **Future use and resale** | Does the layout work? Can you use the space as planned? Will access, parking or restrictions affect a later sale? |

## Winnipeg water and foundation questions

Ask separately about foundation seepage, sewer backup, plumbing leaks and sump failures. Request the dates, repair scope, photos, invoices and any warranty. Review grading, downspouts, sump discharge and backwater valve maintenance. A backwater valve addresses a different pathway from water entering through a wall. [13]

Cracks, uneven floors and patches need context. Significant displacement, bowing, continuing movement or repeated water entry deserve suitable specialist assessment. Do not diagnose a structural problem from crack width or a photograph alone.

## What can winter hide

Record what snow, frozen ground or seasonal operating limits prevent you from seeing or testing: grading, drainage, exterior surfaces, air conditioning or yard work. Decide what additional evidence, access or contract terms are needed before proceeding.

> HOW I HELP
>
> My construction background helps me notice practical questions at the showing and connect visible conditions to the records we should request. I flag the need for specialist advice instead of treating a showing as an inspection.

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07 BASEMENTS PERMITS AND HEALTH QUESTIONS

# What is behind the finished space

A room's appearance does not establish approved use or the condition of concealed work.

## Finished basements and legal rooms

Ask what existed before finishing: water or movement history, foundation repairs and photographs before drywall. A bedroom needs more than a window; a separate entrance or kitchen does not establish a legal secondary suite. Verify applicable approvals for the intended use. [11,12]

## How do I check permits

Review scope and inspection status, not just a permit number. Winnipeg's online records have date limits and exclusions; older files may need a separate request. "Issued" is not completed, and "closed with an incomplete inspection" needs clarification. Ask the City what remains unresolved. [10]

## What about disclosure and radon

The house contract allows different arrangements for a **Property Disclosure Statement (PDS)**. It is not an inspection or a warranty that nothing is wrong. Have your lawyer review the seller's statements, separate contractual warranties and any limitations. [8]

Ask for radon reports and any mitigation and retesting records. Health Canada recommends long-term testing of at least 91 days, with heating-season requirements for interpreting a below-guideline result. Its guideline is 200 **becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m³)**; above it, current advice calls for corrective action within one year, sooner at higher levels. A brief reading is not an annual exposure assessment. [14,15]

Before renovation, get appropriate advice on suspected asbestos or other hazardous materials. Disturbing material can create a risk that an ordinary showing cannot assess. [16]

> HOW I HELP
>
> I request the story and supporting records, identify gaps and help arrange follow-up. If a material question cannot be resolved in time, we discuss that uncertainty before you make a commitment.

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08 RURAL HOMES AND COTTAGES

# Assess the house and the site together

Water supply, wastewater, access and seasonal operation can determine whether the property suits your plans.

## Does a good water test prove a good well

No. Water quality, available quantity and equipment condition are separate questions. Request well records, suitable laboratory testing, pump and treatment history, and a qualified review of yield and recovery where needed. Ask about seasonal shortages, freeze protection and recurring treatment costs. [17]

Describe treatment accurately, including **ultraviolet (UV)** disinfection where present. Clear water and treatment equipment do not prove every relevant contaminant has been addressed.

## What wastewater system am I buying

Confirm holding tank, septic field or another arrangement. Obtain location, layout, registration or approval and service records. A pumping receipt is not a complete condition assessment. Check suitability for planned occupants, bedrooms, additions and replacement access.

Sewage ejectors and available municipal sewer can carry specific transfer obligations. Exceptions or approved responsibility arrangements may apply. Confirm the file with Manitoba Environment and your lawyer before assuming the buyer can continue using the existing system. [18]

## Can I use and insure it year round

- [ ] Verify legal access, road ownership, snow clearing, fees, easements and boundaries.
- [ ] Confirm seasonal water, heating, winterization and vacant-period limitations.
- [ ] Review outbuilding approvals, fire protection and property-specific insurance requirements.
- [ ] For wood heat, ask whether the insurer requires an inspection by a professional certified through Wood Energy Technology Transfer (WETT). WETT certifies people, not the appliance. [19]

> HOW I HELP
>
> I organize the property-specific questions and records, coordinate access and help compare the complete site and operating costs. Your lawyer, insurer and qualified water or wastewater specialists verify their respective issues.

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09 TURNKEY BUILDS AND CONSTRUCTION

# What does the advertised price include

A finished-looking home and the word turnkey do not define the full scope, tax treatment or completion obligations.

| Request in writing | Questions to resolve |
|---|---|
| **Plans and specifications** | Foundation, waterproofing, structure, insulation, windows, ventilation and finish standards. |
| **Systems and allowances** | Heating and cooling, electrical service, plumbing fixtures, appliances and allowances for selections. |
| **Site and servicing** | Grading, driveway, culvert, utility connections, landscaping and rural water or wastewater work. |
| **Price and changes** | Inclusions, exclusions, taxes, change-order pricing, payment schedule and responsibility for overruns. |
| **Completion and warranty** | Inspection milestones, occupancy, deficiencies, actual warranty provider and terms, delay rights and responsibilities. |

## Do new homes need an independent inspection

Discuss appropriate inspections during construction and before possession, including what access the agreement allows. Municipal inspections, a builder's warranty and an independent inspection serve different purposes. Record incomplete work and deficiency arrangements in writing.

## How do financing and taxes change

Ask the lender about draws, appraisal, completion requirements and any need to fund costs before reimbursement. Have your lawyer review holdbacks, which are amounts retained under applicable legal or contract requirements, and the payment terms.

Confirm whether **goods and services tax (GST)** is included or additional, who receives any rebate and whether you qualify. New or substantially renovated housing can have different tax treatment from a typical resale home. Verify current rebate rules before budgeting a benefit. [20]

> HOW I HELP
>
> I help compare competing packages on the same scope, identify exclusions and negotiate commercial terms. Your lawyer reviews the construction agreement and your lender confirms the funding plan.

10 INSURANCE TAXES AND POSSESSION

# What needs to happen before I get the keys

Confirm the money, coverage, documents and responsibilities before the final days become rushed.

| Insurance term | What it means |
|---|---|
| **Mortgage default insurance** | Protects the lender if the borrower cannot repay. The lender confirms whether it is required and the cost. [3] |
| **Optional mortgage life or disability cover** | Different creditor products with their own terms; these are not a substitute for required default insurance. [4] |
| **Property insurance** | Protects specified property risks under the policy. Confirm wiring, plumbing, roof, water and occupancy questions before relying on coverage. |
| **Title insurance** | A separate policy for specified title-related risks. Ask your lawyer about coverage, exclusions and whether it is suitable. |

## The closing checklist

- ☐ Lender: final requirements and funding confirmed; avoid changes that could affect approval.
- ☐ Lawyer: identification, documents and exact funds request received; verify payment instructions using a trusted contact.
- ☐ Insurer: required coverage and effective date confirmed, including any conditions.
- ☐ Utilities and services: accounts, meter arrangements, moving access and address changes organized.
- ☐ Walkthrough and keys: arrange permitted access, check agreed items and report concerns promptly to your agent and lawyer.

For Winnipeg taxes, distinguish the **Tax Instalment Payment Plan (TIPP)** from the **Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit (HATC)**. Check current eligibility and application steps; a seller's payment is not your confirmed future bill. [22,21]

> HOW I HELP
>
> I help keep communications and agreed transaction steps organized. Your lawyer directs legal closing and your lender and insurer confirm their requirements. After possession, retain reports and set a maintenance plan.

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11 YOUR WORKING DECISION SHEET

# Turn questions into assigned follow ups

Property _____ Target possession _____

| Question or missing evidence | Who follows up | Due date | Resolved |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Financing and insurance requirements** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Inspection and specialist findings** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Permits room uses and repair records** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Title access and legal review** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Cash to close and reserve retained** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Rural servicing or build scope if relevant** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Condition notices and final decisions** | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| **Closing funds walkthrough and keys** | _____ | _____ | _____ |

## Before I proceed I understand

- ☐ The full price and cash requirement, including money retained for repairs.
- ☐ What has been inspected or verified and what remains unknown.
- ☐ The deadlines and the effect of satisfying or waiving each condition.
- ☐ Which documents or professional opinions support my intended use.
- ☐ What I am accepting, what is being negotiated and what could change my decision.

> BRING THIS TO OUR NEXT CONVERSATION
>
> Tell me which answers are still missing. I help organize the follow-up and connect the findings to your price, terms and decision. You do not need to know every technical question before asking for help.

For condominium ownership, fees, reserve funds, disclosure and cancellation rights, read the companion Manitoba Condominium Buyer Guide.

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SOURCES 1 TO 12

# Sources and practical references

Numbered references and source titles are clickable.

01 **Financial Consumer Agency of Canada** · Getting preapproved for a mortgage
Qualification, property review and remaining approval requirements.

02 **Financial Consumer Agency of Canada** · Choosing a mortgage
Mortgage terms, payment structure and insurance distinctions.

03 **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation** · Mortgage loan insurance
Default insurance protects the lender; confirm product and eligibility with the lender.

04 **Financial Consumer Agency of Canada** · Optional mortgage insurance products
Life, disability and other optional creditor coverage differ from default insurance.

05 **Manitoba Finance** · Land transfer tax
Tax brackets use registration-date fair market value; registration fees are separate.

06 **Canada Revenue Agency** · First Home Savings Account
Account eligibility, participation room and qualifying withdrawals.

07 **Canada Revenue Agency** · Home Buyers Plan
Retirement-plan withdrawals, eligibility and applicable repayment timing.

08 **Manitoba Laws** · Residential Offer to Purchase Contract
Completed single-family house form: deposits, conditions, notices and seller representations. Actual amendments matter.

09 **Manitoba Real Estate Association** · Customer Status Buyer Acknowledgement
A buyer may receive services from the seller's brokerage without being represented by it.

10 **City of Winnipeg** · Property permit search guidance
Record coverage and permit-status distinctions, including incomplete inspections.

11 **City of Winnipeg** · Basement development
Approval requirements for new rooms and living areas.

12 **City of Winnipeg** · Secondary suites
Check the property-specific approvals and design requirements.

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SOURCES 13 TO 22

# Sources and practical references

Numbered references and source titles are clickable.

13 **City of Winnipeg** · Basement and overland flooding
Different water pathways require different prevention and repair measures.

14 **Health Canada** · Residential radon measurement guide
Long-term measurement and heating-season interpretation.

15 **Health Canada** · Government of Canada radon guideline
200 becquerels per cubic metre guideline and current corrective-action advice.

16 **Health Canada** · Healthy Home Guide
Asbestos and other household health risks; safe renovation precautions.

17 **Health Canada** · Testing well water
Choose suitable bacterial and chemical tests; quality and water supply are different questions.

18 **Manitoba Laws** · Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation
Current municipal-connection and sewage-ejector transfer obligations include specific exceptions and arrangements.

19 **Wood Energy Technology Transfer** · Frequently asked questions
Certifies individuals; an inspection report does not certify the appliance or installation.

20 **Canada Revenue Agency** · Sales tax and home construction
New and substantially renovated housing can have different sales-tax treatment.

21 **City of Winnipeg** · Tax credit programs
Principal-residence eligibility and current homeowner credit administration.

22 **City of Winnipeg** · Tax Instalment Payment Plan
Monthly payment arrangements, application timing and changes.

Sources checked 31 October 2026. Examples are illustrative Canadian dollars, not quotes or valuations. General education does not replace transaction-specific legal, lending, tax, inspection or insurance advice. Use current documents and the actual agreement.

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