

FREE BUYER CHECKLIST / OTTAWA

10 questions to ask *before you hire an agent.*

Your interview checklist from The Campbell-Maric Group: ten targeted questions, what good answers sound like, the red flags, and a scorecard to compare up to three agents. Type your notes right on this page and save them as a PDF, or print the blank version and bring it with you.

Your agent choice has real financial consequences.

The average residential sale price in Ottawa was \$692,584 in March 2026, according to the Ottawa Real Estate Board. On a purchase that size, the agent you choose affects what you pay, which conditions you secure, and which risks you never knew existed. This is not a decision to make from a yard sign, or from a recommendation you have not checked.

Take one hour to evaluate before you commit. This checklist gives you ten targeted questions, what good answers sound like, and the red flags that should send you elsewhere.

Before any interview, look the agent up on the public register at reco.on.ca. It takes 30 seconds. Do it first.

LOOK UP AN AGENT AT RECO →

Interview up to three agents. Compare side by side.

Record what each agent said under every question: whether their answer matched what to look for, raised a red flag, or fell in between. At the end, score each agent out of 10.

You can type your notes right into the boxes on this page, on a phone or a computer. They save automatically in your browser on this device, and nothing is sent to us. When you are done, save them as a PDF. Prefer paper? Download the blank printable version instead.

FOUR STEPS

01 Verify

Check each agent's registration at reco.on.ca before the interview.

02 Ask

Ask all ten questions. Write down their actual answers, not your impression.

03 Compare

Count the good answers against the red flags for each agent.

04 Decide

Score each agent out of 10 on the scorecard and make your decision.

Transaction volume

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“How many Ottawa buyers did you represent in the past 12 months? At what price points? In which neighbourhoods?”

Recent, local, specific experience in your price range tells you far more than years licensed.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- A steady record of recent buyer transactions (as a rough guide, a dozen or more a year)
- Experience in your price range and target neighbourhoods
- Specific numbers, not generalities
- Named neighbourhoods, with context

RED FLAGS

- ◆ Vague answers that lean on years licensed
- ◆ “Hundreds of transactions” without recent specifics
- ◆ Cannot name the neighbourhoods they work in
- ◆ No clarity on price-point experience

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

The multiple offer process

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“Walk me through exactly what you do before, during and after a multiple offer situation.”

Competing offers still happen in Ottawa, especially on well-priced homes in established neighbourhoods. An agent who has not thought through their method in advance can cost you money, or the home.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

● A specific, practised process, not a general philosophy

● Offer structure tailored to the situation

● A conditions strategy: what to include, what to waive, and when

● Guidance on deposit size and knowledge of escalation clauses

● A clear plan for communication after the offer

RED FLAGS

◆ “We need a strong offer” with no method behind it

◆ No mention of escalation clauses

◆ Vague advice about “going in high”

◆ No discussion of conditions or deposit strategy

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Neighbourhood knowledge

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“Tell me something about [my target neighbourhood] that I couldn't find on a real estate website.”

This question separates agents who work Ottawa from agents who simply hold an Ottawa licence. Real neighbourhood knowledge goes beyond MLS® data. It comes from showing homes on the same streets, going to open houses, and knowing what buyers are competing for right now.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Specific, current insight on pricing
- A read on competition and listing patterns
- Knowledge of upcoming developments or zoning changes
- School catchment details and community character
- Detail that only comes from being there

RED FLAGS

- ◆ Generic answers that fit any Canadian city
- ◆ Reliance on stats you could pull yourself
- ◆ No specific streets, buildings or community references
- ◆ Cannot tell the neighbourhood apart from the ones next to it

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Compensation and disclosure

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“How are you paid, and what does TRESA require you to give me before I sign a buyer representation agreement?”

Ontario’s Trust in Real Estate Services Act (TRESA) brought in new consumer protections in December 2023. Your agent must give you RECO’s Information Guide before you enter an agreement, and your buyer representation agreement must be in writing and set out how the brokerage is paid. An agent who is unfamiliar with this raises a serious competence concern.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- A clear explanation of how they are paid
- Knows what TRESA requires before you sign
- A comfortable, open discussion, with no defensiveness
- Willing to walk you through how compensation can be structured

RED FLAGS

- ◆ Verbal answers only
- ◆ Unfamiliar with TRESA or the December 2023 changes
- ◆ Dismissive about disclosure
- ◆ Pressure to sign before your questions are answered

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Full-time commitment

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“Is real estate your main occupation? How much of your income comes from it?”

The best-priced listings in popular areas can still move quickly. An agent juggling another career may not be able to respond when it counts. This is not a criticism of part-time agents. It is a practical reality of the market you are entering.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Real estate is their main professional focus
- Available on evenings and weekends
- A team or coverage plan for when they are unavailable

RED FLAGS

- ◆ Part-time, with no clear coverage plan
- ◆ Another main career, with real estate on the side
- ◆ No answer for how they handle time-sensitive situations

Why this matters: if your agent cannot be reached on a Saturday morning when the right home comes up, you may lose it by Monday.

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Communication and availability

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“How do you communicate: calls, texts, email? When can I reach you? What happens if you are unavailable when something urgent comes up?”

Mismatched communication is one of the most common sources of buyer frustration. Set expectations before you sign. An agent who cannot describe their system in an interview is unlikely to become more responsive once hired.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Clear response times for calls, texts and email
- Honest about when they are and are not available
- A named colleague who steps in on time-sensitive decisions

RED FLAGS

- ◆ Vague availability
- ◆ No named backup
- ◆ The sense that urgency is your problem to manage

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Buyer representation agreements

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“Can you walk me through the buyer representation agreement before I sign it? What are my rights and options under it?”

The buyer representation agreement is a legally binding contract. You have every right to understand it fully before you sign. An agent who is impatient with this question, or cannot explain the document they are handing you, should not represent you on a purchase worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- A patient explanation of every section
- Clear on the term and the geographic area covered
- Explains which property types are covered
- Open about the compensation terms
- Explains how the agreement can end, and your rights

RED FLAGS

- ◆ Pressure to sign before your questions are answered
- ◆ Cannot explain the document they are presenting
- ◆ “It’s standard” instead of an explanation
- ◆ Dismissive about ending the agreement or your right to ask

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Ottawa-specific property knowledge

ASK EXACTLY THIS:
“What Ottawa-specific property issues should I be aware of in the homes I’m looking at?”

A knowledgeable Ottawa agent should raise these without being prompted, because they are basic to buying well here. Blank looks on two or more of them is a failure of basic due diligence.

Leda clay

Sensitive marine clay that can cause foundation movement in parts of Ottawa. A good agent flags it in affected areas without being asked.

Radon

Parts of the Ottawa area have elevated radon levels, and Health Canada recommends testing every home. Your agent should raise it when discussing the inspection.

Vermiculite insulation

Found in some homes built before 1990. It may contain asbestos and needs a specialist inspection. Your agent should know when to flag it.

WETT inspections

Many insurers ask for one on homes with a wood stove or wood fireplace. Your agent should suggest it as part of your inspection.

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Pricing and offer strategy

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“Walk me through how you would work out a property's value before we write an offer.”

Your offer price is one of the most important decisions in the purchase. An agent without a real pricing method is either guessing or deferring to the market, and neither serves you. A solid comparative market analysis (CMA) is the foundation of every offer.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- A methodical CMA, not just intuition
- Recent comparable sales close by
- Adjustments for the specific home's condition
- Days on market, and what that says about the seller
- List-to-sale price ratios in that neighbourhood
- A clear recommendation with reasoning you can evaluate

RED FLAGS

- ◆ “We'll see what other offers come in”
- ◆ No mention of comparable sales or a CMA
- ◆ Treats the list price as the anchor
- ◆ No discussion of the seller's position or days on market
- ◆ Cannot explain their recommendation with data

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

References

ASK EXACTLY THIS:

“Can you give me the names and contact details of three buyers you worked with in the past six months?”

Online reviews are curated. Real references are not. A good agent can name three recent buyer clients right away. When you call them, ask two questions that go beyond satisfaction.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

● Three names and contact details, given right away

● References who are genuinely enthusiastic, not just satisfied

● Clients in your price range and target area

RED FLAGS

◆ Cannot name three recent clients

◆ Points you to online reviews instead

◆ References who are family or friends

"Did the agent spot anything you wouldn't have caught on your own?"

This shows whether they were working for the buyer or just processing a transaction.

"Would you hire them again, without hesitation?"

The pause before the answer tells you as much as the answer. Listen for conviction, not politeness.

YOUR NOTES

AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3

Score each agent out of 10.

After all ten questions, step back and look at the whole. Competence matters, and so does how they made you feel. Did they listen? Did they earn your trust? Did you feel like a priority, or a prospect?

9 to 10	Exceptional. Specific, confident and knowledgeable on every count.
7 to 8	Strong. Minor gaps, but credible overall. Follow up on the weak areas.
5 to 6	Average. Serviceable but not exceptional. Proceed only if there is no stronger option.
Below 5	Concerning. Several red flags. Keep interviewing.

AGENT COMPARISON SCORECARD

	AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3
Agent name			
Brokerage			
Registration checked (reco.on.ca)			
Q1 Transaction volume			
Q2 Multiple offers			
Q3 Neighbourhood knowledge			
Q4 TRESA and compensation			
Q5 Full-time commitment			
Q6 Communication			
Q7 Buyer representation agreement			
Q8 Ottawa property knowledge			
Q9 Pricing and offer strategy			
Q10 References			
Overall score (out of 10)			
Would you hire them?			

We welcome every question on this list.

Ask us all ten. We work Ottawa's neighbourhoods every week, real estate is our full-time profession, and we walk every buyer through compensation and the buyer representation agreement before anything is signed.

Local knowledge

Neighbourhoods, pricing and Ottawa property risks, including Leda clay, radon and WETT inspections.

Clear on TRESA

Open about how we are paid, the agreement's terms and your rights as a buyer, before you sign anything.

Full-time team

Real estate is our main profession, and a teammate covers when one of us is unavailable.

LOOK UP OUR REGISTRATION AT RECO →

START THE CONVERSATION

Ready to interview *us*?

Bring this checklist. We will answer every question on it, and if we are not the right fit for you, we will say so.

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