The Niagara First-Time Buyer Guide

A calm, practical guide for buyers navigating their first home purchase in the Niagara Region.

Helping YOU. One Move at a Time.

Prepared by
Jay Pacecca
Sales Representative | Royal LePage NRC Realty
(905) 329-8146 | jpacecca@royallepage.ca | jaypacecca.ca

Buying your first home is one of the most exciting and most overwhelming decisions you will ever make. This guide is designed to help you understand the process clearly, so you can move forward with confidence rather than confusion.

There is no pressure here. Read through at your own pace and reach out when you are ready.

A NOTE FROM JAY

My Advice as a Former Teacher

> *As a former teacher, I believe first-time buyers do not need pressure. They need clarity. My job is to help you understand the numbers, the risks, the neighbourhoods, and the process so you can make a confident decision at your own pace. There is no rush, no sales pitch, and no question too basic. That is exactly what I am here for.*

STEP 1 — KNOW WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

Start With the Numbers, Not the Listings

It is tempting to start browsing homes online, but before you fall in love with a property, get a clear picture of what you can actually qualify for. This saves time, protects you emotionally, and makes you a stronger buyer when the right home comes along.

- Get a mortgage pre-approval, not just a pre-qualification. It carries real weight with sellers.
- The minimum down payment in Canada is 5% on homes up to $500,000 and 10% on the portion between $500,000 and $999,999.

- Budget for closing costs on top of your down payment, typically 1.5% to 4% of the purchase price.
- In Ontario, first-time buyers may qualify for a Land Transfer Tax rebate. Ask your agent or lawyer about this.
- The First Home Savings Account allows eligible Canadians to save up to $40,000 tax-free toward a first home.

Jay can connect you with trusted local mortgage professionals in the Niagara Region who work with first-time buyers every day.

STEP 2 — UNDERSTAND THE NIAGARA MARKET

Where You Buy Matters as Much as What You Buy

Niagara is one of Ontario's most livable regions and one of its most diverse real estate markets. Depending on your budget and lifestyle, different communities offer very different options.

- St. Catharines. The region's largest city, with a strong mix of detached homes, semis, and condos, plus good transit and amenities.
- Welland. One of the most affordable entry points in the region, offering solid value for first-time buyers.
- Thorold. Close to Brock University and a good option for buyers looking for value near St. Catharines.
- Pelham and Fonthill. Quieter communities with newer builds, popular with young families.
- Grimsby and Lincoln. Growing communities with easy highway access to Hamilton and the GTA.
- Niagara Falls. A range of price points with a strong community feel beyond the tourism corridor.

Jay will help you understand which areas make the most sense for your life today and five years from now.

STEP 3 — THE BUYING PROCESS

What Actually Happens, Step by Step

Here is what the journey typically looks like from start to keys in hand.

Step 1. Free Buyer Consultation

You meet with Jay to talk through your goals, timeline, budget, and must-haves. No obligation, just clarity.

Step 2. Mortgage Pre-Approval

Before serious searching begins, you get a pre-approval letter from your lender. Jay can connect you with trusted local mortgage professionals.

Step 3. Targeted Property Search

Jay sets up a customized MLS search based on what actually matters to you. You review listings and tour the most promising ones.

Step 4. Making an Offer

When you find the right home, Jay walks you through the offer strategy, covering price, conditions, deposit, and closing date. He protects your interests throughout.

Step 5. Conditions and Inspection

Offers typically include a home inspection period and a financing condition. These protect you and give you time to confirm everything checks out.

Step 6. Closing Day

Your lawyer handles the final paperwork and transfer of funds. Jay stays connected through the whole process so nothing falls through the cracks.

WHAT FIRST-TIME BUYERS OFTEN DO NOT KNOW

A Few Things Worth Knowing Before You Start

- In many resale transactions, the buyer agent's compensation is offered through the listing side. We will always review how compensation works clearly before you make any decisions.
- Conditions protect you. Do not let anyone pressure you into waiving them without fully understanding the risk.
- The deposit is part of your down payment, not on top of it. It is typically 1% to 5% of the purchase price, paid within 24 hours of an accepted offer.
- Your lawyer is essential. Budget $1,500 to $2,500 for legal fees and disbursements in Niagara.
- Title insurance is strongly recommended. It is a one-time cost that protects you from issues with ownership.
- If you are buying a home over $1 million, mortgage insurance is not available. You will need a full 20% down payment.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Whenever You Are Ready

You do not need to have everything figured out before reaching out. Jay works with buyers at every stage, from early curiosity to ready-to-offer. A short, no-pressure conversation is often the clearest next step.

Have questions about the process, the market, or whether you are ready to buy? Jay is happy to talk it through. No pressure, no obligation, just honest answers from someone who genuinely enjoys helping first-time buyers get it right. Call or text: (905) 329-8146 Email: jpacecca@royallepage.ca Visit: jaypacecca.ca

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