

# NEWHOMES



Who doesn't love to receive a home made picture frame from someone special. This is one my daughter Meaghan gave my dad years ago.

## Happy, sustainable holidays!



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According to the website MarketWatch, 44 % of shoppers spend over \$1,250 during the holiday season and 5 per cent spend over \$6,500. And only half of consumers can pay off the associated debt within three months. At the same time up to 28 % of gifts are returned.

That's a considerable amount of time, household debt and energy (both personal and related to transportation going to and from a store or via delivery services) tied to gift giving. Gifts one-quarter of which people don't even want.

Yet another interesting statistic from MarketWatch is that over half of consumers are last minute shoppers. So, here's a thought: with just days remaining before the end of the year, why not try having a happier holiday season that involves less stress, time and money, while making your world and ours more liveable and sustainable? Here are just a few

examples of how you can do that.

**1. Give the gift of experience.** For many of us, our homes have become repositories for things we use sparingly or not at all. At the same time, there's a growing body of evidence that points to the fact that what we truly value in life aren't possessions, but rather meaningful experiences.

So instead of giving stuff, consider giving an experience which could range from tickets to a show or some sort of live performance, to an experience that you provide yourself, such as offering to cook dinner for a family member or friend.

One of my favourite gifts over the years, has been a 'coupon' book my daughters have made me that includes experiences ranging from going for a hike or run together, to them offering to make dinner to watching a movie 'of your choice'.

**2. If you must give 'stuff', opt for quality over quantity.** Our homes are often cluttered with possessions, ranging from clothes we no longer wear to broken down or dated electronics we don't know what to do with. Often, it's because we've been gifted something we don't want or need. Or we've opted for price over quality. Or we haven't properly researched the lifespan of a product.

My personal epiphany with respect to this point came during a recent call with Fitbit support, tied the breakdown of my two-year old Ionic watch that cost hundred of dollars. They advised that the screen

had failed, it was past the one-year warranty and no they didn't have a repair facility, but they'd give me a discount on a new watch. And the takeaway? If buy something, make sure it's designed to last.

**3. Give a plastic free gift.** Better still, one that replaces plastic altogether. We live in a world deluged with plastic products that inevitably will end up in a landfill site for at least 200 years. So, in order to help reverse our addiction to plastic, why not consider giving a more sustainable plastic-free gift?

Noteworthy examples include: reusable containers, water filters or soda makers (to minimize or eliminate the use of plastic bottles) and reusable shopping or produce bags. For any of these products, ideally choose one's designed to be compostable or recyclable at the end of their life cycle.

**4. Donate your useful used.** Cash donations to needy causes are a great way to give, but another worthy contribution, especially if you're trying to keep a lid on household debt, is to donate some of your rarely or 'gently used' items that others can benefit from.

So everything from power tools, games and camping equipment you can donate to your local tool library to current, in demand books you can contribute to the local public or school library to bicycles you can give to such needy causes as Big Brothers and Sisters.

**5. Give the gift of time.** This last point bookends the first one. There are countless stories of people who look back on life, wishing they had spent more time with friends and family. So why not make a point of 'gifting' special time together with someone you care about. Or, offering to free up time for someone you know who is 'time stressed', whether it's to offer to shovel their driveway or cut their grass, recognizing that we live in a world where time, not money, is our most precious commodity. And then lastly, consider donating your time to a charity or needy cause.

By following through with at least some of these ideas, you will hopefully find this holiday season to be a bit less stressful, a little easier on your pocketbook and quite likely more fulfilling

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## Three holiday reflections for a busy 2019



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It's that time of year where we spend time with family and reflect on the year that is about to pass.

Where did 2019 go? It was a busy one for the residential construction industry. Here are a few thoughts for you about the behind-the-scenes of the construction of your new house or condo suite that will be important for 2020.

**1. Supply, supply, supply.** Remember the favourite pitch rattled off by most real estate agents about the most important factor in finding a new home?

Well, consider "supply, supply supply" the mantra of builders/developers who want to help get millennials, new Canadians and the middle class into new houses and condo suites. But we can't do it without help.

Bill 108 — the More Homes, More Choice act — is a good first step and a brave move but there is a lot more that needs to be done so that more people can get a new home, especially at the municipal level.

Without serious reform and digitization of the approvals process to move us into the 21st century, the GTA will continue to rack up a deficit of 20,000 new homes every year. If we look across the Pacific Ocean to Tokyo, where housing policies have seen relative deregulation (no rent controls and fewer restrictions on height and density), there is hope for the GTA.

After all, Tokyo's substantial increase in supply has kept home prices from rising as drastically as many other international cities, including Hogtown.

**2. Get youth into construction.** We can't emphasize this enough: we need more young people to join the skilled trades as well as construction management, especially women.

According to BuildForce Canada, the next decade will see 103,900 jobs open up because of impending retirements and the burgeoning demand of new-home buyers for all types of construction across the GTA.



Many positive steps have been taken such as the *More Homes, More Choice Act* but there is a lot more that needs to be done so that more people can get a new home.

This is a drum I've been banging all year long with the RESCON team, including our VP Andrew Pariser, as skills training and development is a big component of what our association promotes (visit the new [rescon.com](http://rescon.com) for two 2019 reports).

Our strong partnerships on this issue include George Brown College, Humber College, BOLT (Building Opportunities for Life Today), the Centre for Skills Development, STEP to Construction (TDSB) and Job Talks Construction.

**3. Partnership with government.** The Ontario government's ministers have been responsive to the industry's needs. Do they follow up on everything we ask? Absolutely not. But they are listening, and we appreciate it. In fact, Minister Monte McNaughton visited BOLT's Day of Discovery on his first day on the job for the skills development and training file.

Housing and Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Clark visited our annual general meeting and was the keynote speaker for the University of Toronto's BIM+ event — he wants to establish a BIM mandate in Ontario so the industry undergoes a digital transformation in delivery of service. We support this move.

Meanwhile, we also pledge to continue to work with the City of Toronto on crucial issues as they arise — including the city's water and wastewater distribution crunch.

Earlier this year, the noise bylaw exemption resolution involving concrete work (a crucial stage of construction for new high-rise projects) proved that city council and the industry can collaborate for satisfying outcomes for all parties.

Thank you for reading, and good luck with your house hunting. Happy holidays, merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah — and Happy New Year!

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