

## Up-Island house prices up 14%

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The average price for a home north of the Malahat hit \$329,000 during May -- a 14 per cent increase over the same month a year ago, say the latest figures from the Vancouver Island Real Estate Board.

Board president Jennifer Lynch, who represents the six Island districts outside the capital region, says housing demand remains strong with high employment levels, gains in personal income, affordable interest rates and a steady influx of out-of-province buyers.

She adds market confidence is being shared by both buyers and sellers. "We have seen an increase in available inventory this year, which indicates a buyer's market," says Lynch. "However, we have also seen an increase in the average sales price and number of transactions, which contradicts the former, and suggests a seller's market. With both of these happening simultaneously, we're in a balanced market."

Parksville-Qualicum showed the largest increases, with 94 homes averaging \$373,000, an 18 per cent rise from May 2006. Nanaimo was close behind, showing a 17 per cent increase with 206 home sales averaging \$345,962. The median prices in those communities were \$330,000 and \$327,000, respectively.

Elsewhere, Duncan's average price climbed 12 per cent to \$347,000 on 122 sales last month. The average price in the Comox Valley soared nine per cent to \$342,000 on 119 sales. There were 56 sales in Port Alberni, averaging \$203,000, up eight per cent from May a year ago.

Campbell River was the only region to remain flat, with the town's average slipping just over \$1,000 to \$281,000.

In Greater Victoria, average prices hit \$560,000 last month.

The B.C. government yesterday pumped \$10 million into an internship program where graduate students work with B.C. businesses to solve challenges and encourage innovation and commercialization. The announcement by Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell more than triples the size of the program, providing funding for 650 interns over the next four years. Another \$5 million will come from industry partners. The program will be administered

through the Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems (MITACS), a national research network that brings together university researchers and companies. "B.C.'s graduate students are truly an untapped resource," said Dr. Arvind Gupta, scientific director of MITACS. "The research expertise that the next generation is developing is going to help B.C.'s businesses to become more competitive on the national and international stage. This \$10 million in new funding from the province will help to ensure that knowledge transfer takes place."

Don't Miss: Reid Bigland, president and chief executive of DaimlerChrysler Canada, is in Victoria on June 19 to discuss everything from the automaker's official Recovery and Transformation Plan to the environmental challenges facing the industry, and Chrysler's line of vehicles. Bigland, who grew up in Vancouver and was appointed to the top Canadian post last July, is speaking as part of the Green Business Series luncheon at the Delta Ocean Pointe Resort sponsored by Epcor and hosted by the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce. Tickets are \$45 for chamber members, and \$60. You can get them online at [www.victoriachamber.ca](http://www.victoriachamber.ca) or 383-7191.

Don't Miss II: Camosun College's Capstone Symposium, featuring the projects of computer system technology grads, is slated for June 13 in the Young Building on the Lansdowne Campus. Students create innovative software for clients such as the provincial government, Department of National Defence and Mercurial Communications. It's open to the public from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Genealogy buffs were trumpeting a major announcement last week to bring online the entire Canadian Passenger List collection from 1865 to 1935. It includes all of the immigrants -- including age, country of origin, occupation and destination -- who arrived in Canada via ports in Victoria, Vancouver, Halifax, Saint John, N.B., and North Sydney, N.S. The list also accounts for other travellers and crew members. The deal between Ancestry.ca, the largest Canadian online resource for family history, and Library and Archives Canada, Canada's chief keeper of historical documents, will initially focus on indexing the more than 750,000 names on the Quebec City passenger lists between 1870 and 1900. It will be available free. Later this year, Ancestry.ca will also list U.S.-Canada border crossings between 1908 and 1935. Check

[www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca).

Harry Janzen, the new dean of education of Malaspina University College in Nanaimo, has been given a Distinguished Service Award by the B.C. School Superintendent's Association for his leadership and contributions to public education over the past 35 years. Before joining Malaspina last January, Janzen had been superintendent of Port Alberni-area schools for a decade while teaching part time at Simon Fraser University.

Courtenay-based lighting retailer The Lighthouse has been selected by B.C. Hydro as a recycling depot for the new compact fluorescent bulbs. The pilot project for the Comox Valley will deter from landfills the mercury and phosphorus contained in the bulbs. Lighthouse employs six staff and is considered the north Island's largest supplier of lighting products. It is owned by Kevin Tarrant and Jocelyn Manley. Call 250-338-8839.

Longtime western wear retailer Ridgerider has been named Business of the Year by Campbell River Tourism. Owner Gerry Sadler hasn't only been a mainstay selling hats and boots and other western apparel from his downtown store, but also has been tireless in promoting tourism on historic Pier Street and the entire region, says Chris Steffens, president of Campbell River Tourism.

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