

Q

Wh-a-a-a-t?
How many
condo units
were sold last
month in the
GTA?

A

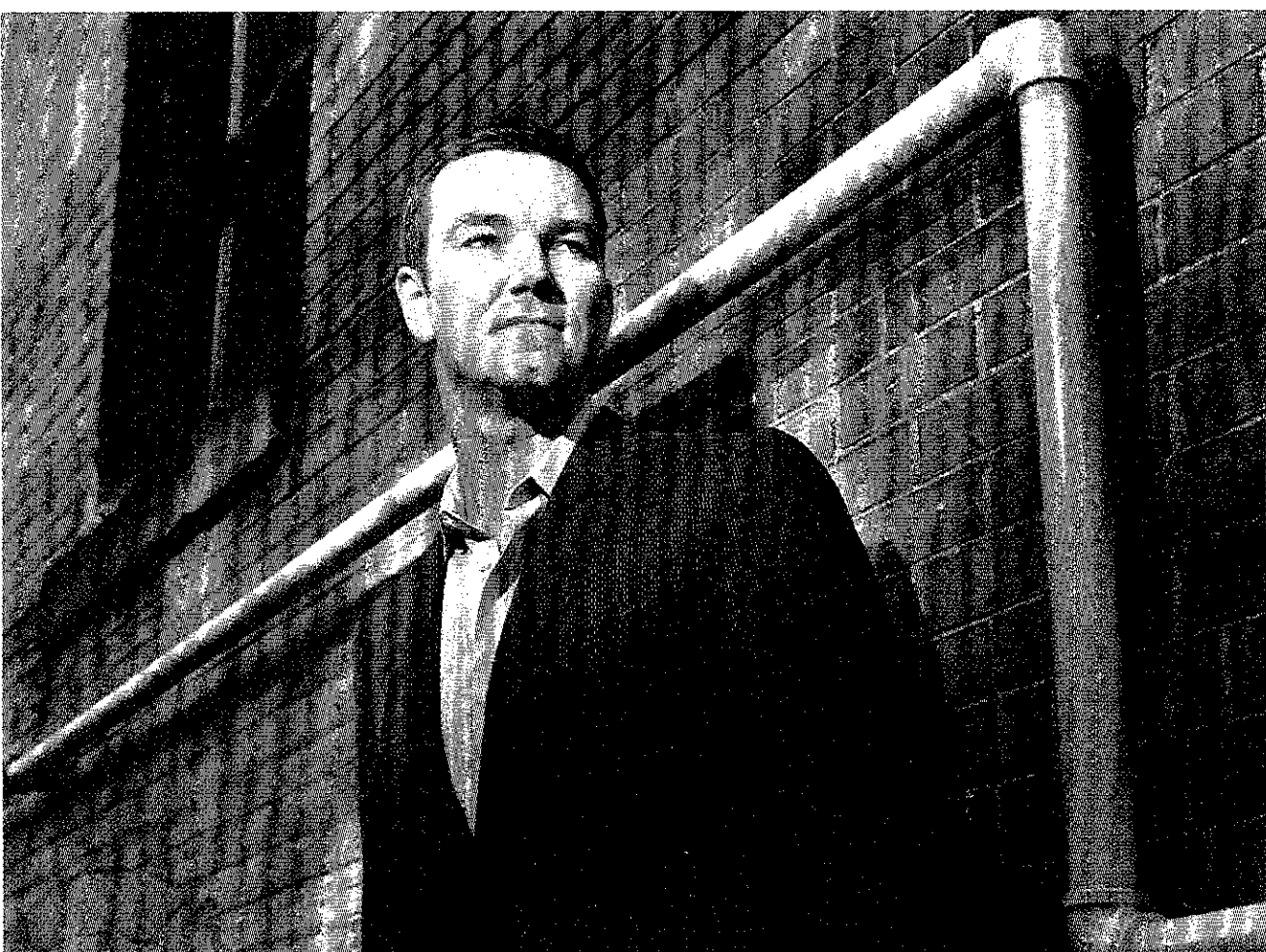
The Greater Toron-
to Area had a 52.9%
increase in condo
sales in September
2011 over Septem-
ber 2010; that's
2,652 units sold
versus 1,735. Bro-
ken down by area,
the most sales were
in 416, at 1,695 (a
36.1% gain) — but
York Region had the
greatest percent-
age gain at 209.8%.
That represents 725
units sold this Sep-
tember versus 234
sold last Septem-
ber. Year to date,
the GTA high-rise
market is up 43.9%
over this time in
2010.

Q

Why don't
kitchen sinks
have overflow
drains like
bathroom
sinks do?

A

Kitchen sinks do
not have overflow
drains primarily due
to aesthetic prefer-
ences of the North
American market,
Kohler Canada re-
ports. An overflow
drain is not required
by building codes
and consumers
favour the way a
kitchen sink looks
without it.
National Post



QUIET RIOT

Condo developers catch on to the electric vehicle *By Alex Newman*

I t may be the quietest revolution ever — the newly launched electric vehicles that silently whiz past are expected to take over half the road by 2030.

In the not-too-distant future, says Lewis Poplak, vice-president of development and construction at Triangle West Developments, electric vehicles may even "eclipse combustion vehicles once the technology improves and becomes more affordable."

Not only are EVs quiet and cheaper to run — half a cent per kilometre, as opposed to 6¢/km for gas — they are incredibly green, says Fraser Stark, who recently launched a green transportation company. He says an internal combustion engine vehicle turns only 15% to 20% of the gasoline's energy into torque, and the rest is "uncombusted hydrocarbons and heat." An electric motor, however, transfers up to 95% of its chemical energy into torque. Even factoring in the emissions required to create electricity, the EV carbon footprint is low.

Because EVs have a high acceleration rate, luxury buyers are also purchasing — BMW, Mercedes, Porsche and Audi are among the several carmakers introducing EV models.

Anticipating a surge in EVs on the road, the City of Toronto recently issued a directive to new-build condos, that if they are "providing more than the minimum parking required under the zoning bylaw, any additional spaces must provide roughed-in conduits to allow for future electrical outlets for plug-in electrical vehicles."

Condo developers, especially downtown, have been quick to pick up the idea. Developer Gary Silverberg, for example, said it took him "all of five minutes to say yes when the idea of roughing in up to 15% of ART Condo's parking was on the table."

When Triangle West first launched Art in 2010, Mr. Poplak knew "it was just a matter of time before electric cars would be commercially available, so we instructed the electrical engineer to

provide enough parking spots serviced with appropriate outlets and meters, and that the overall electrical capacity was sufficient to meet future needs."

For condos, however, electric cars pose a problem. They're easy to charge with a nearby outlet — a no-brainer when you have a house, but trickier at a condo.

As Tridel's sustainability advisor Jamie James points out, "the technology is so new, we're still in the middle of figuring things out. For example, how do you know what percentage of parking spots is right? And since you don't know who will buy [an EV], it's hard to know where to place the outlets."

Context's director of design and marketing Craig Taylor agrees. At Market Wharf's two phases, 20% of overall parking space has been committed to EV outlets. But since nobody has a crystal ball foretelling who will have an EV, Context is "holding back the EV outlet roughed-in spaces until the end of the assignment process. If there are only EV roughed-in spots left, we will assign them as needed, regardless of whether the purchasers have electric cars."

If a buyer already has an EV, he can upgrade the parking spot to include the rough-in. That is attached to his property and goes with resale. It's not hard to accommodate EVs in condos, Mr. Taylor says, "if you plan up-front and provide separate meters."

The bigger challenge comes with retrofitting condos — the issue is not only how to pay the initial costs, but also how to handle the maintenance fee structure for a condo without individual hydro metering.

It's something that property manager Michael Goldrich has looked into, since fielding inquiries from condo managers who introduced the EV idea to the condo board. But after asking if owners are thinking about purchasing an EV, the boards "aren't seeing a great demand for it."

But Mr. Goldrich admits these are early days, and he has been researching possible solutions on his own. One possibility,

currently used in California, is designating a visitor parking spot for the outlet and meter, so that EV owners can charge up — like filling up at a gas station.

The problem is that the cars still take several hours to charge, even with a 220-volt outlet. So a better option would be individual outlets with sub-meters; more condo buildings are already switching to sub-meters for unit hydro billing. (Studies show sub-metering reduces overall energy use by 50%.)

Who will pay for rewiring a parking spot isn't all that clear. Common fund expenses require the approval of two-thirds of owners, and reserve funds are for emergencies or unusual repairs. In theory, condo owners could install outlets themselves, Mr. Stark says, but maintenance and insurance must be considered, so having a reliable source of information would help.

As for anticipating who might purchase an EV and need an outlet, nodes or junction boxes throughout the parking garage would make it easier to run a length of wire to the specific parking spot as needed. And if the building's overall power capacity isn't enough, Mr. Stark thinks that, rather than adding another transformer, it would be better to install a load-shedding device with a programmable logic controller to measure the building's power use.

In the evenings, especially, power gets tapped out or close to the limit, leaving only what's left for charging EVs. Since most charging occurs overnight, power is in greater supply. It's also greenest — powered by wind farms, nuclear or hydroelectric generation, rather than natural gas or coal, as at peak times.

Outlets could be programmed to start charging at midnight, with an override function if the driver needs to have the car fully charged later that evening.

Like everything new, there are lots of questions. But as Mr. Goldrich says, "you can always find an answer if you're looking for one."

National Post

Fraser Stark, founder and CEO of ParkPlug Power, a new green transportation company.

AARON LYNETT / NATIONAL POST

CONDO CULTURE

How to know
if there's
room for you
and your pet

DOCUMENTS

BY MARILYN LINCOLN

Q I'd like to buy a condo that welcomes pets. Is there information about this in the condo documents?

A Pet restrictions are tucked away in the declaration or rules that govern the condominium property. When any restriction is clearly worded and contained in the declaration it is enforceable. All owners are bound by the declaration and it is "vital to the integrity of the title" of each unit owner.

There are several reasons why some condos allow pets and others do not. Most prospective buyers want a choice. Some people are allergic to animals. They will want to be assured that when they walk down the hallways or enter an elevator they do not have to fear an allergic reaction. Others may be afraid of certain breeds of dogs and are constantly reminded that even the best-trained animal can become agitated and suddenly turn. On the flip side there are many owners who adore pets. After all, it is a proven fact that pets can be good for your health and can often be the only friend a shut-in person has. They also complete a very valuable service for those with disabilities who require a dog and therefore cannot be denied one under the Human Rights Code.

Unfortunately, condo boards and pet owners too often find themselves embroiled in costly legal battles that drag on for years, pitting residents against one another. Not being aware of a pet restriction is not a valid excuse, as buyers are expected to find out about such restrictions prior to purchasing. This is one area where legal advice is essential. A good condominium lawyer will be able to confirm to you whether or not pets are allowed. Do your homework in order to avoid any disappointments regarding your beloved pets.

■ Marilyn Lincoln is a condo owner, director and author of *The Condominium Self-Management Guide 2nd ed.* Send questions to marilyn-condoguide@hotmail.com.
National Post



MORTGAGE RATES 19.10.11

Rates are subject to change. Selection of financial institutions may vary weekly. Figures supplied by Fiscal Agents

	Variable rate	6months	1yr	2yr	3yr	4yr	5yr		Variable rate	6months	1yr	2yr	3yr	4yr	5yr
BANKS															
ATB Financial	3.80	4.45 - 6.30op	3.50 - 6.30op	3.85 - 6.50op	4.05	4.79	4.09	Effort Trust	n/a	4.45 - 6.30op	3.45 - 6.30op	3.80	4.30	4.75	5.15
Alterna Svgs/Alterna Bk	2.49	4.00 - 6.30op	3.05 - 6.30op	3.30	3.55	3.55	3.60	Equitable Trust	-	6.30op	3.50 - 6.30op	3.85	4.35	4.79	5.19
								Home Trust Company	3.10	-	2.99	2.99	3.49	3.59	3.59
								Investors Group Trust	n/a	4.55 - 6.50op	3.50 - 6.30op	3.85	4.35	4.79	5.25