

Real estate by computer

In April, real estate agents in Toronto will be able to buy or sell property listed in the city with personal computers through one of the most advanced computerized listing services in North America, according to Maurice Lamond, chairman of the Toronto Real Estate Board computer committee.

About 13 000 brokers and agents will be able to subscribe to its on-line database for \$40 a month *per* terminal. Each subscriber will be assigned a code to prevent unauthorized entry into the system. Agents can access the database with a variety of microcomputers.

A user can call up any listing by address, street, district or by specifying a search that is limited to ignore houses that are too expensive or the wrong colour for the potential buyer.

The application of computer power to realtors' needs has many advantages, including:

- access to multiple listings of residential and commercial property listed by member brokers, updated immediately;
- storage of sold listings to aid in determining property value;
- "reverse prospect" functions to identify a potential buyer to other agents to permit immediate matching of buyers and sellers; and
- identification of open houses by date, street, district or type of house to enable a buyer to focus his attention on desired listings.

The system will begin with 30 000 listings and two years of back listings, said Wes Lore, executive vice-president and general manager of the board. Initial demand is expected to be 400 terminals.

Land use guidelines

Guidelines for future planning of land use in Ontario have been published by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, following more than ten years of study and public consultation. This is a first for Canada, and one of the most comprehensive studies of its kind anywhere, according to the ministry.

Among recommendations contained in the document are the creation of 155 provincial parks of various types.

The guidelines also take into account the economic significance of existing tourist operations and the potential for expansion.

Canada and nine European nations sign anti-acid rain agreement



Ministers of the Environment from nine European countries joined with their Canadian counterpart Charles Caccia to issue a five-year declaration pledging their countries to reduce the pollution that causes acid rain. Seen at the signing ceremony are (from left to right): Bruno Böhlen (Switzerland); Svante Lundkvist (Sweden); Mrs. Rakel Surlien (Norway); Baron Bentinck (the Netherlands); Mme Huguette Bouchardeau (France); Matti Ahde (Finland); Carl-Dieter Spranger (Federal Republic of Germany); Christian Christensen (Denmark); Charles Caccia (Canada); and Dr. Kurt Steyrer (Austria).

Canada and nine European nations reached an environmental milestone March 21, signing a five-point declaration promising to reduce pollution that leads to international acid rain, reports *The Globe and Mail*.

The ten countries — Canada, West Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland — have committed themselves to reduce sulphur dioxide, which forms sulphuric acid rain, by 30 per cent by 1993. They have also promised unspecified cuts in other air pollutants, mainly nitrogen oxides, which form nitric acid.

The 30 per cent sulphur cut was described as probably not enough to save the European environment, but it will retard damage. It was also described as the highest figure considered acceptable to most nations.

Canadian Environment Minister Charles Caccia said he hoped that the document would encourage the US government to reconsider its refusal to join Canada in a 50 per cent reduction of acid-forming sulphur dioxide emissions in the eastern half of North America. As well, the nine European nations hope to bring pressure on their polluting neighbours, particularly Britain and some East Bloc nations, to reduce acidic air pollution.

Acknowledging that the 30 per cent

cut may not be enough in some cases, the declaration says that further sulphur emission cuts may have to be made "where environmental conditions warrant".

In addition, some countries, such as Sweden, have already made a 50 per cent cut and are making the 30 per cent cut as well, while others are just starting their acid rain control programs.

It was the Nordic countries which first suffered from acid rain damage, recording dying lakes 15 years ago, with most of the pollution blowing in from Central Europe.

The major polluting nations of Central Europe started taking action only in the past few years, when the cumulative effects of years of pollution led to a sudden decline in their forests. For example, about 34 per cent of Germany's forests are ailing or dead. In Switzerland, the pollution threat to high-altitude forests is so great there is a fear trees will die and there will be nothing to stop devastating avalanches from sweeping down off the mountains.

International pressure on polluting countries will mount later this year during meetings of more than 30 nations, including those who have not promised pollution cuts. The meetings, involving countries in the Economic Commission for Europe, will be held in Munich in June and in Geneva in September.