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Hiring a pro to primp your house

With the housing market tightening up, everyone is looking for a way to help entice potential buyers. And they're willing to spend some money to do it.

How much? Well, 54% cent of Canadians think that \$2,000 or more is the appropriate amount to spend in preparing a house for sale, while a surprising 25% are willing to pay over \$5,000, suggests research by Royal LePage Real Estate Services.

While not everyone can afford Debbie Travis, more and more sellers are enlisting some professional help. [Enter the stagers.](#)

House staging is the art of [decorating a home to sell quickly and for top dollar](#). Interior arrangers can change the look of a room, often using only the things you already own.

According to Royal LePage, the top three interior features when selling a home are freshly painted walls (30%), flooring (29%) and organized storage space (20%).

One of the things that Debra Gould, owner of Six Elements, a home-staging consultant in Toronto, [looks at is lighting](#). Upgrade light fixtures and use higher-wattage bulbs since brightly lit rooms appear bigger and are more inviting, she advises.

Another effective staging technique is [removing, rearranging and resizing furniture](#), creating space by removing oversized pieces, says [Joanne Paquette, a well-known stager in Ottawa](#).

According to Royal LePage, three quarters of Canadians would remove furniture from their house if they thought it would increase the value of their home.

According to some pros, a staged home in a rising market can bring in as much as 10 per cent more than the same home without staging.

For a full consult with an experienced home stager, expect to pay between \$600 and \$1,200. If the stager provides the furnishings, the cost could run about ten times that amount for many homes, however.

And, yes, if you're thinking of getting into the business, Gould does offer training sessions through her [Staging Diva](#) site.

Did you hire a stager to help with the sale of your home? Did it pay off? As a buyer, did you feel a bit hoodwinked by the process?

By Gordon Powers, MSN Money