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April 17, 2011

## Shocked by stories of the "neighbours from hell"

In my column on April 2, I wrote about a study by Halifax Home Insurance in the U.K. which reported that more than 360,000 Britons, or one in 10 people, moved home because of irritating neighbours.

I expressed my doubts that that statistic would apply in Canada and I invited readers to contact me if they moved because of a "neighbour from hell." To say that I was inundated by emails would be an understatement. I stopped counting after three dozen.

After reading far more emails than I expected, I'm now prepared to reconsider: it seems that many more people than I thought move to get away from their neighbours.

Many readers wrote to complain about junk in the neighbour's backyard, noisy "boom box" speakers, rowdy friends, drifting smoke from cigarettes and marijuana, weekly parties, loud music, and even conversations across the backyard between adjacent neighbours on each side.

Don wrote in to say, "Were 'bad neighbour' insurance available, we would certainly have bought it."

Several readers described musical jam sessions in the basement or garage of the home next door or across the road. Typically the sessions involved electric guitars, amplifiers, and drumsets which were in use all day, or all night, or both. Arno found an effective way to end the nightmares. When the musicians were evicted for rent arrears, he convinced his daughter to buy the house. Problem solved.

Sandra complained that there is no Toronto bylaw prohibiting this kind of noise between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. She is ready to move.

Diane emailed from the 905 area. She has called the police 40 times complaining of harassment, but tells me that they have not been helpful.

Lisa lasted eight years with the neighbour from hell next door. This neighbour delighted in repeatedly complaining about non-existent noise coming from Lisa's house. Every time the police arrived, they would find the house in darkness and everyone sleeping. The neighbours damaged her pool equipment, threw eggs onto the pool deck, dumped soap powder into the pool and put a loudspeaker in their window tuned to static at full volume.

"The police wouldn't do anything and neither would the courts," she wrote.

Back in 1985, Marcia moved into a townhouse only to discover that the neighbours kept a noisy goat in the backyard. Marcia discovered that a single goat is regarded as a pet under city bylaws.

At the hottest time of the following summer, Billy was slaughtered in the garage. The stench survived Billy by several days, and eventually Marcia's family put their house up for sale.

Diana moved after discovering an illegal rooming house next door. She once found a neighbour who was either drunk or dead lying in her driveway. Another time, the neighbours were changing tires and working on their cars in her driveway. After living with loud music, rabbit droppings and cat urine on her doorstep, she reports she is pleased to be out of the house now.

Kevin Thomson is a Royal LePage sales rep in Oakville. "(Moving) happens more frequently than you imagine. I myself moved last year after parents moved three young men in next door to me." Thomson describes them as "rude spoiled brats" who were left to "run amok (sic) like a frat house."

After living in her house for three years, another reader had a neighbour from hell move into the house behind her. Two large Dobermans were kept in the backyard permanently. There was a heavy rain the following spring and the neighbour was on higher ground. It was only after waves of liquid dog poop started flowing under the fence that the reader moved out. Her two next door neighbours moved shortly afterward.

For anyone considering buying a house or condo, the lesson from my torrent of emails seems to be: Check out the neighbours before you buy.