



# Mayoral debate highlight of realtor conference

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TREB PRESIDENT'S COLUMN AS IT APPEARS IN THE TORONTO STAR

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If you are one of the hundreds of thousands of Greater Toronto Area residents who have undertaken a home transaction in recent years, you probably recognize what a fast-paced and competitive business real estate is in our city.

In addition to helping you find a home suited to your lifestyle, REALTORS® are required to stay on top of changing regulatory requirements, market projections, marketing and technology advancements, and a multitude of other variables.

To help them refuel and stay up to date, the Toronto Real Estate Board hosts an annual two-day conference for Members called REALTOR® QUEST.

This year's conference, held May 5th and 6th at the Toronto Congress Centre, drew an estimated 6,000 attendees with its many attractions, the highlight of which was a debate between six candidates running for Toronto Mayor in this fall's municipal election. Moderated by TVO's Steve Paikin, the forum featured candidates Rob Ford, Giorgio Mammoliti, Joe Pantalone, Rocco Rossi, George Smitherman, and Sarah Thomson. The discussion covered several topics but Greater Toronto REALTORS® were most interested to hear the candidates' views on the Toronto Land Transfer tax, which TREB Members believe should be repealed.

The majority of Toronto residents seem to back that view. A recent public opinion poll conducted by the Environics Research Group for the Toronto Real Estate Board shows 60 per cent of Torontonians oppose the Toronto Land Transfer Tax and 36 per cent said that they would be more likely to vote for a Mayoral candidate who promised to do so.

Another of the conference's features was Canada's largest real estate tradeshow, with more than 200 exhibitors. Its centre stage showcased non-stop entertainment and information sessions including a question and answer session on the Harmonized Sales Tax, a sit-down chat between rock 'n roll great Ronnie Hawkins and journalist Linda Leatherdale and a performance by the Thorncliffe Park Public School Children's Choir in support of the Children's Breakfast Program.

A partnership between the Toronto Real Estate Board and the Toronto District School Board, the children's breakfast program currently provides nutritious meals and snacks to students in 13 different schools everyday. Real estate brokerages have stepped forward to adopt 10 schools, with further support provided by corporate sponsors and TREB staff.

The program is just one example of Greater Toronto REALTORS' commitment to the community. Last year alone, they provided grants to 20 different local shelter-related charities through the REALTORS® Care Foundation. They renewed this commitment for a third consecutive year at the conference's General Meeting, where Members voted to contribute more than \$300,000 to the REALTORS® Care Foundation.

Given that REALTORS® are required to achieve 24 Continuing Education credits every two years in order to practice in the profession, many seize the opportunity to brush up on their knowledge at the conference. Its Learning Quest component featured 20 complimentary Continuing Education sessions in six different subject areas.

To commemorate TREB's 90th anniversary this year, banners and memorabilia were on display in a gallery at the conference offering a look back at Toronto real estate throughout the decades.

At another featured attraction, a health and wellness fair, conference goers received interactive health screenings, information and giveaways.

Each day's events concluded with a reception featuring live music, an auction and complimentary appetizers, leaving REALTORS® refueled and ready to get back down to business.

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*Tom Lebour is President of the Toronto Real Estate Board, a professional association that represents 28,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area.*