



## Lobbying Goes a Long Way

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

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REALTORS® provide a multitude of services to the public when buying, selling or leasing property, everything from negotiation to marketing to appraisal. What many people don't realize, however, is that there is so much more REALTORS® do that is not visible to the public. Ironically, this unseen work is equally as important, especially when it involves lobbying governments at all levels on your behalf.

REALTORS® interaction with governments occurs in many forms, but probably the most critical is the work they do to ensure that politicians consider the impact of their decisions on home buyers, home owners, and real estate markets. With this in mind, REALTORS® and their professional associations are constantly monitoring government proposals and actions, and are ready to spring into action.

The most recent example of this was the relentless fight that the Toronto Real Estate Board took to Toronto City Council against the unfair imposition of a second land transfer tax in Toronto. As a direct result of REALTORS® efforts, the implementation of this tax was delayed and eventually the proposed tax was reduced and rebates were provided for first time home buyers to a maximum of \$3,725.

In addition to Toronto, REALTORS® efforts on land transfer taxes have benefited homebuyers across the province. For years, the Ontario Real Estate Association has been calling on the provincial government to expand its \$2,000 maximum land transfer tax rebate for first-time buyers of new homes to also include re-sale homes. As a result, the Province took this action last December.

REALTORS® not only fight back against bad government ideas; they also proactively propose good ideas. REALTORS® first-hand knowledge and expertise allows them to understand

what governments do well, and what they can do better, for home buyers, owners and real estate investors. This is why REALTORS® proposals to governments, at all levels, are always given serious consideration, and often adopted, by politicians.

A good example of REALTORS® proactive efforts is the Home Buyers' Plan, which originated as a proposal from the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA). TREB, along with real estate boards and associations across the country, worked with CREA to successfully lobby for this federal government program which allows homebuyers to withdraw up to \$20,000 (\$40,000 per couple), tax-free, from their RRSP, to put towards the down payment on a home. Since the program's inception in 1992, more than 1.8 million Canadians have used it to purchase almost 900,000 homes. Currently, REALTORS® are working to convince the federal government to increase the program's withdrawal limits to \$25,000 per individual to reflect inflation since the Plan's introduction in 1992.

REALTORS® are proud of the work they do, both directly and indirectly, for their clients, especially when it comes to government regulations and taxation. Over the coming months, I'll provide you with more details on past and current examples of these efforts. In the meantime, you can rest assured that Greater Toronto REALTORS® are watching your back.

*For more information on subjects like this, visit [www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com](http://www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com)*

*Maureen O'Neill is President of the Toronto Real Estate Board, a professional association that represents 27,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area.*