



# REALTORS® Invest Time to Improve

Maureen O'Neill

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

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A record number of Greater Toronto Area REALTORS® invested time in enhancing the professional knowledge and skills they provide to their clients by attending the Toronto Real Estate Board's annual REALTOR® Quest conference recently.

More than 8,000 REALTORS® participated in the event, which took place at the Toronto Congress Centre May 6th and 7th. The conference featured Canada's largest real estate tradeshow with more than 200 booths, a sizeable Continuing Education component and non-stop events on Centre Stage.

A number of prominent municipal politicians, including Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion paid a visit to Centre Stage May 6th for a panel discussion about taxes on property. Moderated by AM640's morning show host John Oakley, the panel also included City of Toronto Councillors Denzil Minnan-Wong, Karen Stintz and Michael Thompson, who have often been cited as potential mayoral candidates. Mayor Frank Scarpitti from the Town of Markham, where property taxes were recently frozen, also took part in the discussion.

"In recent years we have seen property taxes increase, a new Toronto Land Transfer Tax take effect and growing discontent among Torontonians regarding the management of municipal government," said TREB President Maureen O'Neill. "It was of great benefit to hear experienced leaders' views on how such factors are affecting homeowners and our city's economic outlook."

Also that day, Jason Mercer, who is responsible for the Toronto Real Estate Board's market analysis, teamed up with George Carras, founder of RealNet Canada, to talk about trends in major segments of the GTA real estate market with respect to residential and commercial property, both new and resale.

Mercer and Carras told the crowd that the GTA is in stronger shape than many other markets in North America and that recent conditions were weathered much better than in previous cycles.

"As a result of their direct access to both MLS and new home markets Greater Toronto Area REALTORS® are well equipped to be successful at any stage of the housing market cycle," said Ms. O'Neill.

The session was included as part of TREB's General Meeting, during which several key decisions were made. For example, TREB Members voted overwhelmingly in favour of continuing to support of the REALTORS Care Foundation's Every REALTOR® program, which will result in donations to shelter-related charities.

"REALTORS® believe that everyone deserves a place to call home and with this in mind, TREB presented REALTORS Care Foundation grants to 19 shelter-related charities throughout the GTA last year," said Ms. O'Neill. "Since its inception, the REALTORS Care Foundation has donated more than \$2 million to shelter-based organizations throughout the province; it's an initiative that TREB is very proud to support."

On day two of the conference Canada's most trusted contractor Mike Holmes paid a visit to REALTOR® Quest's Centre Stage. Holmes and his crew recently constructed a sustainable home as part of Brad Pitt's Make it Right project in New Orleans' Ninth Ward. Currently, Holmes is developing his first community, Wind Walk in Southwest Alberta, which is expected to set a new standard for residential construction and design with its eco-friendly, sustainable homes.

Throughout the two-day event 30 complimentary Continuing Education courses were offered in seven different streams. The courses drew more than 8,000 attendees.

"Greater Toronto REALTORS® look to this conference as a source of information on all of the latest tools and trends in the profession," said Ms. O'Neill. "It is an excellent example of REALTORS®' ongoing commitment to provide quality service to their clients."

*Maureen O'Neill is President of the Toronto Real Estate Board, a professional association that represents 28,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area.*