



REALTORS® Make the Right Connections

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

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Although REALTORS® often go to impressive lengths to serve their clients, most people don't expect them to go as high as the White House. Well, at a recent event hosted by the Toronto Real Estate Board, REALTORS® did go almost that high.

The event that I am speaking of was the Toronto Real Estate Board's Civic Connections Reception, which brought together numerous elected representatives, REALTORS®, other real estate industry representatives, housing charity leaders, and media to reinforce the message that REALTORS® make it a priority to work with governments to represent the interests of home buyers and owners, and to ensure that our economy continues to prosper. The highlight of the event was a keynote speech by David Plouffe, who, as Campaign Manager, was instrumental in President Obama's successful, and unprecedented, campaign to reach the White House.

On the surface, it may not seem obvious how face time with Mr. Plouffe can benefit REALTORS® clients; but, for REALTORS®, who, over the years, have fought numerous campaigns to stand up for the interests of home buyers and owners on government policy, Mr. Plouffe's insight was invaluable. The better prepared that REALTORS® are to speak up on government policy, the more success we will have in ensuring that home buyers and owners are treated fairly. With this in mind, we were paying very close attention to the advice that Mr. Plouffe had.

Perhaps the most interesting insight that Mr. Plouffe provided was the importance of grassroots efforts. In this regard, Mr. Plouffe confirmed what REALTORS® already know: that our close connections with our

communities allow us to effectively communicate with the public and, when necessary, rally their voices to speak up on government policy decisions. REALTORS® efforts against the City of Toronto's Land Transfer Tax were a good example of this type of grassroots work. Although Toronto City Council eventually implemented this unfair tax on home buyers, grassroots efforts, from the public and REALTORS®, helped to delay its implementation and achieve significant concessions.

While REALTORS® connections to their communities has helped to achieve significant political victories benefitting home buyers and owners, we are equally proud of the work that we do to give back to our communities. With this in mind, I was happy that our Civic Connections Reception not only gave us an opportunity to collaborate with Mr. Plouffe, but also to present a cheque for over \$340,000 to the REALTORS® Care Foundation, which supports shelter-related charities in Ontario. I was also happy that the event gave us the opportunity to present two scholarships of \$5,000 to two impressive students from the GTA. I will be providing more detail on these initiatives in a future column.

REALTORS® are proud of the work they do to represent home buyers and owners with governments, and to help improve our communities. We will continue to do so, and we will continue to learn from the experiences of others, like Mr. Plouffe.

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