



There's More to us than MLS

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

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If you are one of the thousands of GTA residents who has made a move to a home more suited to your lifestyle this year, chances are you used the services of a REALTOR® to help you do so.

On the surface it may seem that a REALTOR'S® access to the Multiple Listing Service is the most significant reason for working with a real estate professional.

While REALTORS® can use the MLS® to match your housing preferences with available properties and help you establish realistic expectations if you're selling, it is just one of several tools they use to offer you professional advice.

They can also for example, access the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation's database to provide you with valuable insight into current taxes on individual properties, ownership histories and lot size specifics.

Using Teranet's GeoWarehouse, they can retrieve even more information that is useful in the decision-making process like streetscape imagery, mapped neighbourhood sales, and average local incomes.

As well, if you're considering a newly constructed home, your Greater Toronto REALTOR® has your needs covered through their access to RealNet Canada's database of new home listings.

RealNet reports on 99 per cent of all developments greater than 15 units in size in the GTA. Its database includes more than 35,000 current records, which are updated on a monthly basis. A search of the RealNet database can be conducted by housing type, location, price range and number of bedrooms. Searches can produce an array of details including builder names, lot sizes, condo fees, and quantity of available units.

This information can help you measure your preferred builder's value proposition and more carefully weigh your decision with respect to choosing new versus resale housing.

Your REALTOR® can also advise you on government programs that will save you money. For example, if you're considering a few fix-ups prior to listing, your REALTOR® can provide you with details of programs like the Home Renovation Tax Credit and the Energuide for Houses Retrofit Grant. If you're wondering whether buying a home is within reach, your REALTOR® can tell you about a program that, with only five per cent down, allows you to apply for mortgage insurance that can facilitate your purchase. As well, if you are a first-time homebuyer, your REALTOR® can advise you of a program that allows you and your partner to each withdraw up to \$25,000 from your RRSPs to put towards your purchase.

Greater Toronto REALTORS® also work tirelessly to advocate your interests on important issues like property taxes, sales tax harmonization and the Toronto land transfer tax. They make direct contributions to GTA communities as well, helping to feed 1900 children in 11 local schools every week through the Children's Breakfast Program and providing grants to 20 shelter-related charitable organizations this year alone.

These are just a few of the many ways that there's more to Greater Toronto REALTORS® than MLS®. To find learn more about working with a REALTOR® please visit www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com

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