



Helping those in desperate need in Haiti

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

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It's estimated that the earthquake in Haiti affected as many as three million people, taking the lives of 200,000 and injuring 250,000 more. More than one million people are now homeless as a result of the disaster. It has been noted that it was the worst earthquake in the region in more than 200 years. Indeed, with respect to loss of human life, it ranks in the top 10 most devastating earthquakes in recorded history, dating nearly as far back as 500 BCE.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, ranking 149th of 182 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. By comparison, Canada ranks in fourth spot, preceded by Iceland, Australia and Norway.

Given that Greater Toronto REALTORS® recognize the essential role that shelter plays in everyone's lives, the Toronto Real Estate Board has donated \$50,000 to the Canadian Red Cross to help with relief efforts, and help the people of Haiti.

TREB has a long history of donating at home and abroad when disaster strikes. Last year alone, Greater Toronto REALTORS® presented REALTORS® Care Foundation grants totaling \$171,000 to 20 local shelter-related charities, including relief efforts to help victims of an earthquake in China and those struck by a cyclone in Burma in 2008.

We can take great pride in the fact that our country has stepped forward to provide one of the three largest military contingents to Haiti. There is certainly much work to be done: the international airport's traffic control tower was severely damaged, as were hospitals and prisons, to name only a fraction of the affected infrastructure.

For those of us fortunate to live in prosperous nations, this devastation underscores the importance emergency preparedness on an individual level. Those living in Haiti however, were at a tremendous disadvantage with regard to facing such a cataclysmic event. Even prior to the earthquake, more than 2 million people in Haiti were homeless, and shortages of potable water and fuel were the norm. With this degree of poverty and no building codes in existence, it is unlikely that the people of Haiti would have been in a position to withstand a disaster of any magnitude.

It is my sincere hope that our donation will help improve shelter conditions for the millions of Haitians dire need. Greater Toronto REALTOR® are professionals who truly care about making a positive difference in and the lives of those less fortunate around the world.

For more information on working with a REALTOR® please visit www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com

For more information the Government of Canada's pledge to match donations to relief efforts until February 12th please visit www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

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