

RESALE

Punching above its weight

Century 21 Canadian operation shows up well in global ranking

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Real estate personnel at Century 21's Canadian operation are clearly doing something right, according to results of the firm's 2017 global rankings, which measures overall sales production.

In 2017, 12 of the organization's top 21 offices in the world were based in Canada and three of the top 10 teams were based in the GTA, specifically Oakville (Miller Real Estate), Markham (Leading Edge Realty) and Richmond Hill (Atria Realty).

"Canada's real estate market has made headlines around the world and these results show that the country punches above its weight," said Martin Charwood, vice chairman and CEO of the firm's Canadian operation. "We make up fewer than 10% of Century 21 agents in the world yet dominate the global rankings."

In addition, Toronto realtor Ken Yeung of Century 21 Leading Edge Realty Inc. was the top producer in the world in terms of units and gross closed commissions. Yeung's specialty is con-

dominiums primarily in the downtown core, but also in the 905 region.

"He does a ton of business, no question about that," said Brian Rushton, executive vice president of Century 21 Canada. "This is the second year that he has taken the top spot in the number of units and the first year in the top spot of overall commissions. Half of his business has been with pre-sale condos, which has been very big."

Rushton added that a key reason this country's per-person-production is higher than most other countries has to do with the fact it is an agent-centric business.

"We pay higher commissions to the sales people because they look after their own expenses. Up until the late 1980s, the real estate industry in Canada was very conventional: A realtor would get a license, they would come to work for a broker, the broker would pay all the expenses and commissions would be shared 50-50 or 60-40."

That all changed with the big housing crash of the late 1980s which lasted upwards of five years and forced Canada's real estate industry



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to reassess how they operated.

"The big crash put a whole new twist on the marketplace. It was at that particular point that we all looked at each other as brokers and owners and said there is a better way to do this," said Rushton.



Century 21 has changed the real estate business by giving realtors upwards of 95% of a sale while having them take on more of their expenses.

"We had lots of realtors that weren't doing anything, but they still had to get paid. We changed the environment and said we will give the realtors on the street upwards of 95% of a sale, but you have to pay your freight on the way through, i.e. a monthly fee, transaction fee and membership fee.

"That took place in the early to mid-1990s. The U.S. is just now going through that trend, which is interesting"

As for projected sales for 2018 in the GTA, Rushton said Toronto Real Estate Board statistics, which showed home sales in February down 35% compared to the same time a year ago, "are running fairly consistent with our franchisees.

"Some markets are up, some are down and it depends on where you are in the GTA," he said. "The 416 has been more consistent in holding the numbers and units and prices than the 905."

Crammed subway leads many to cry out #GimmeRelief



RICHARD LYALL
RESCON

Does anyone really believe that the GTA's transit network has kept pace with the growth in our world-class abode? No way!

Those who travel abroad marvel at systems in other major cities which appear to combine housing and transit planning in ways we can only dream about.

Look at Madrid's subway "miracle," for example. That city has demonstrated that complex subway projects can be designed and built relatively quickly. Between 1995-1999, they built 56 kilometres of new railway lines, of which 38 kilometres were tunnelled, together with 37 new stations and four interchange stations.

Compare that with Toronto, where the Relief Line is needed yesterday. The Relief Line would run 7.5 kilometres from the financial district to Pape Station, and eventually farther north to the under-construction Eglinton LRT.

It would relieve pressure on the Yonge/Bloor chokepoint and the subway lines. Currently, construction on the first phase is projected to take 13 years.

Toronto's experience has typically involved bloated schedules and budgets. Is it possible that it might take longer? With the track record of the city and TTC, you bet it will.

This means a long, slow wait over the years at cramped platforms for condo dwellers from Yonge Street and Queen's Quay who continue to choose transit. Perhaps they will wise up and start cycling around the city — or maybe they will get fed up and buy a car. Or maybe business will continue to roll for Uber and Lyft.

Let's set the record straight: Toronto's need for a Relief Line isn't a new issue. The TTC has considered building one since 1969.

Forty-nine years later, Toronto's Line 1 Yonge-University subway line serves an astounding 700,000 daily transit trips — easily the busiest transit hub in Canada.

With this many people relying on the TTC subway, issues on the rails can lead to nightmare days like Jan. 30, 2018. That was the day when a 3.5-

hour period of total chaos included a frozen switch at one station at the northern end of one line; emergency alarms; trains skipping one packed station only to further crowd the already over-capacity Bloor-Yonge stop; and a fight breaking out.

Four years ago, the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) advocated for the Relief Line to relieve such pressure through a four-part video series.

It looked at how the GTA has lost many opportunities to improve transit because politics has dominated the planning process. The Relief Line is presented as a regional solution that would benefit suburban and downtown commuters. (See the series at RCCAO's YouTube channel.)

We need transportation experts, not politicians, to define the problems, solutions and priorities for our transit based on existing and projected needs. A new way must be found so that transit planning and can be combined with housing around new stations.

Meanwhile, a recent \$4.9-billion pledged by the federal government to Toronto transit is long overdue and needs to be expedited. Mayor

John Tory listed the Relief Line first in his list of priorities that would benefit from the announcement.

The City of Toronto can't wait 13-plus years to relieve the pressure at Yonge/Bloor and (east of Yonge) the Bloor-Danforth line.

It's time to make the Relief Line Toronto's No. 1 transit priority — please use the hashtag #GimmeRe-

lief on social media, or call 311 to let your local councillor know the city needs a Relief Line first.

— Richard Lyall is president of RESCON and a frequent speaker and writer on issues related to the home construction industry. Contact him at @RESCONprez or media@rescon.com.



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