

Greater Toronto Area is still a great place to live



HUGH HERON
**ON-SITE
INSIGHT**

I've said it before, and I'll say it again. We're lucky to live in the Greater Toronto Area! We must be — more than 80 per cent of Ontario's immigrants move into the GTA. Obviously, we are the envy of people all over the world. Granted, the City of Toronto has experienced some questionable publicity during the past year, but when you consider the big picture, we have a lot to be proud of. In Toronto and its suburbs, we enjoy an incredible quality of life and an inspiring environment for our diverse population.

In fact, did you know that Toronto is considered one of the

most multicultural cities in the world? It's easy to understand why so many people make this city their residential destination. For example, Toronto is ranked as the safest large metropolitan area in North America by Places Rated Almanac.

That's pretty important for everyone from singles to families and empty-nesters. Even with occasional problems with crime, by world standards, our streets are amazingly safe.

Our reputation as a wonderful place to live, raise a family and even conduct business is recognized around the globe. In 2013 alone, Toronto achieved an impressive number of world rankings from a variety of sources, and the 2014 honours are pouring in.

Already this year, Toronto was ranked 15th out of 50 cities in the Mercer Worldwide Quality of Living Survey, which looks at everything from political factors to public transportation, recreation and the environment. Also this year,

the Toronto Region ranked third overall out of 24 global metropolitan areas for labour attractiveness and economic performance in the Toronto Region Board of Trade's 2014 Scorecard on Prosperity.

There's more! The Times Higher Education World University Rankings for 2013-2014 list the University of Toronto 20th out of 400 global universities. The March 2014 Global Financial Centres Index lists Toronto 14th of 83 global financial centres, and when it comes to cost-effective business and investment climates, the KPMG 2014 Competitive Alternative study places Toronto 5th among 48 global and 3rd of 36 North American cities with populations over 2 million.

Here's another interesting statistic, especially for those who complain about our public transportation. Walk Score's Transit Score report has ranked Toronto 3rd of 70 US and Canadian cities and 1st in Canada for bus, light rail and subway accessibility.

Previously, Walk Score ranked Toronto 11th out of 144 cities in Canada, the US and Australia for walkability. Our population

is diverse in age as well as backgrounds, and Toronto came first in the Youthful City of the Year 2014 category.

This ranking indicates the most attractive places in the world for people between 15 and 29 years of age. Isn't this great? It means that the younger generation is appreciating the potential to live, work and raise a young family in the city.

Not to be outdone by Toronto, the 905 areas of the GTA have also earned many honours and awards. For example, this year, MoneySense Magazine's "Best Places to Live" national survey ranks Burlington 5th, Oakville 7th and Aurora 24th in the top 25 for quality of life. Pretty impressive, don't you think?

The fact is that anyone moving to the GTA has an amazing choice of lifestyles

available, from the downtown urban experience to uptown, suburban, small town and village settings. World-class attractions, inspiring culture, magnificent museums, exciting entertainment, sporting arenas, restaurants with cuisines from around the globe, inviting shopping, top-notch schools, lush parks, beautiful conservation areas, rivers, lakes — we've got it all.

I never tire of promoting our city and its suburbs. Whatever press Toronto may have experienced in the past, we are looking at a bigger picture that is

ushering in an even brighter future. As a resident of the GTA, I believe we live in the very best place in the world!

— Hugh Heron is principal and partner in the Heron Group of Companies and President of Heathwood Homes, as well as a former member of the Board of Directors of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and a Past President of the Toronto Home Builders' Association and the Ontario Home Builders' Association.



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