

RESALE

Technology is king at RE/MAX Realtron

PAUL BARKER

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Alex and Richard Pilarski, co-founders of RE/MAX Realtron have been selling real estate since the 1970s, but there is nothing old-fashioned about the way the two brothers run their business or operate their eight branches that are located throughout the GTA.

Unlike the one agent Alex worked with soon after earning his broker's license who quit his job because he was frustrated with having to learn how to use a push-button telephone, they believe technology advances should be embraced.

"Our favourite expression is that we are either busy being born or busy dying, one of the two," he says. "Even though Richard and I have been in the business 45 years, we are still committed to being born."

As an example, all of their agents have access to Dotloop, an online transaction and productivity software platform that is part of the organization's green philosophy that saves paper, but equally as important allows agents to quickly send and receive electronic documents.



Total costs of renovations at Newmarket location exceeded \$700,000 and includes everything from bright, comfortable areas to the selection of modern art.

Embracing new technology trends has paid off for according to a RE/MAX fact sheet, the brokerage which the Pilarski brothers co-founded in 1985, has been recognized by RE/MAX Ontario Atlantic Canada three times as Multiple Office Brokers of the Year and is among the Top 20 Companies for RE/MAX International out of over 5,600 companies worldwide. In 2016, it was also named the top producing brokerage in the GTA.

"Our approach is not to sell houses to or for people,"

says Richard. "Our objective is to provide our customers with enough information so that they can decide what they want to do, then we use our expertise to help them achieve their goals."

A prime example of what is possible when a healthy operating budget and forward-thinking ideas merge together can be seen at the firm's recently renovated Newmarket office, which has been in the RE/MAX Realtron fold since 2013.

Richard, a registered professional engineer who obtained his real estate licence in 1973,

oversaw everything from the selection of the modern art depicting Toronto scenes to construction of newly built washrooms that alone carried a \$100,000 price tag and an open common area that can be used by any of the 70 agents who belong to the brokerage firm.

Total cost for the renovations at the Newmarket location over the past four years is estimated to be upwards of \$700,000.

"We saw the trend and the trend is to a different type of office," Alex says. "In a sense, it is like the Starbucks concept. We see a lot of our



Even after 45 years in the business, Alex and Richard Pilarski of RE/MAX continue to embrace technology and new ways of doing things.

agents do not want an office, but come in and have a comfortable place to work at bright location, coffee, water and be able to go online."

He adds that while investing in technology advances is critical in terms of "getting information out and finding the right houses, honestly it

still comes down to an individual meeting people and talking to people.

"An agent has to allay their fears because it is the biggest transaction they will ever have and everybody is terrified. You need someone who can hold your hand through that difficult process."

A new sheriff in town

The new lease template will protect the rights of tenants



SABINE GHALI
PROPERTY
MANAGEMENT

Starting April 30, there will be a new lease template required for everyone who is renting in, a single or semi-detached house, apartment building, condos that are rented and any dwelling listed as a secondary unit, such as a basement apartment. This new lease was one of the promises made in the FHP of 2027, (Ontario Fair Housing Plan).

There are over a million private rental occupants in Ontario and on a month-to-month basis, almost twenty thousand units become vacant, or reoccupied.

This new lease will provide a fair standard for both tenants and proprietors. Currently, there is no standard lease.

Due to that, advocates for tenants have seen and heard of outrageous demands attached to previous contracts. With this new standard lease in April 2018, as an example, it will be illegal for a proprietor to ban a possible tenant due to overnight guests, or pets.

Some of the positive changes the standard lease will help with include:

- Helping protect tenants from abusive landlords;
- Having a customary place for basic information such as name, address, rent total and due date;
- Including in the easy to understand template the

rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords, as well as explaining what can and cannot be a part of the lease;

- Producing a guide for this new lease that will be available in 23 different languages; and,

- Aiding in the goal of Ontario, to make housing more affordable for renters.

There are three main concerns regarding this new lease template:

- The lease does not cover social or supportive housing, nursing homes, retirement homes, mobile home areas, land lease communities, or commercial properties.

- There is still an Additional Terms area on the lease that can still potentially allow unscrupulous landlords to

take advantage of their tenants.

- Due to the lack of vacant units on the market, possible occupants might be too afraid to say no to any unfair terms the property owner imposes.

When the new standard lease begins in April, some property owners might still not use it. If that is the case, the tenant can request the new one in writing.

If this request is not met in 21 days, the tenant can actually withhold one month's rent. If the lease has not been provided within 30 days, the tenant does not have to pay back that rent.

It is worth noting that, proprietors have the right to use any lease they choose once it does comply with the Residential Tenancies Act. It is up



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to the tenant to agree, or ask for the new standard lease.

The new template lease is available on the Government of Ontario website and is called the Residential Tenancy Agreement (Standard Form of Lease).

Some advocates and officials feel this new lease was not necessary. Others believe

it was time for a much-needed change. Time will show if tenants feel the same.

— Sabine Ghali is Director at Buttonwood Property Management and an entrepreneur at heart who endeavors to help investors create wealth over time. Visit her at www.buttonwood.ca.