

Report of the Public Perception of the Residential Real Estate Transaction Focus Groups

Project Description

The REALTORS® Association of Edmonton conducted four focus groups which tested the public perception of the residential real estate transaction with funding from the Alberta Real Estate Foundation (AREF). The Association followed up with a self-funded survey of 500 people to provide quantitative data to support the qualitative data obtained from the focus groups.

Four focus groups were convened on the evenings of March 25 and 26. The question guide was designed and the focus groups conducted by Jonathan Weselake of ristintel Inc of Winnipeg, MB. The use of an out-of-town, yet national, researcher was to ensure that local bias was eliminated. Participants were randomly selected by Trend Research of Edmonton and the sessions took place in their facilities in Edmonton. Participants on the first evening were selected because they had never sold or purchased a residential property. On the second evening, participants had all sold or purchased a residential property in the past five years.

Industry members were invited to observe the focus groups and observers represented REALTORS® Association of Edmonton, AREF, AREA and RECA. Invitations were also issued to CREB.

Jonathan Weselake presented the findings of both the focus groups and the survey to industry members representing REALTORS® Association of Edmonton, AREF and RECA on April 15, 2008. Copies of the resulting reports and the presentation PowerPoint were made available electronically to all participants and other industry members upon request.

The survey and focus group results were also presented to a meeting of brokers and managers on April 23.

Results

It was clear from the attendance by industry members at the focus groups and results presentations that they were interested in what this ground-breaking research would reveal. The results were discussed at subsequent board meetings of the REALTORS® Association of Edmonton and RECA. The results will be discussed further at upcoming strategic planning sessions of the Association and considered in the design of marketing and communications plans.

This was the first research to ask the public whether they preferred single or dual agency and what their expectations of a REALTOR® were in each situation. Consumers indicated that under a dual agency situation their expectations were not always met. They questioned the ability of a REALTOR® to genuinely remove themselves from a relationship with their client and to immediately act fairly and impartially with someone that they see as the potential opposition.

Focus group participants indicated that if they had a concern about the way a real estate transaction was handled, they would turn to the broker, the Better Business Bureau, the real estate board or the police to launch a complaint. They did not mention RECA although RECA has responsibility for enforcing the Real Estate Act.

It was clear that consumers were not aware of changes to the Real Estate Regulations (Rule 59) being implemented by RECA. They were also generally unaware of the existence or role of RECA. This suggests that RECA needs to communicate more with the general public and to consult with the public more about the realistic expectations, perceptions and opinions of the public when proposing changes to the real estate industry.

Information Dissemination

Invitations were issued to key industry members to participate in the focus groups. E-mail invitations were sent to RECA, AREA, CREB and AREF. The research question guide was distributed to industry partners, including RECA, in advance of the focus groups for comment. Finally, the full focus group and survey results were made available in printed and electronic forms to all who requested it.

Copies of all reports and presentation materials are attached.

Permission is granted to AREF to post the results of the focus groups and the PowerPoint presentation to their website or to distribute the reports in any other appropriate manner.

AREF Recognition

Alberta Real Estate Foundation was identified as a project funder on the cover of the Focus Group Report and PowerPoint presentation. The Foundation was also acknowledged and thanked publicly at the research presentation and in subsequent results presentations.

Financial Report

Staff and incidental costs (printing etc) were absorbed by the REALTORS® Association of Edmonton and have not been broken out for this project. The only direct costs were charged by riskintel Inc.

Focus Group Costs	\$22,595
Presentation Costs	2,200
GST	1,239.75
TOTAL	\$26,034.75

Contribution from AREF	\$25,000
Contribution from Association	\$1,034.75
TOTAL	\$26,034.75