

The best things about being a builder



HUGH HERON
**ON-SITE
INSIGHT**

In a previous column, I wrote about the risk that builders and developers take when we purchase a piece of land for future development, as we often wait years for the approvals before we can launch a community.

Changing demographics and increasing municipal and provincial restrictions on what can be built where certainly pose challenges; yet I can't imagine doing anything else with my life. From the moment land is bought until the community is completed and families have moved in, I find the entire process fascinating.

My favourite thing is to be in one of Heathwood Homes' sales offices when someone signs on the bottom line to buy a home. There is such excitement and energy that come from the purchasers, especially

if they are first-time buyers. I also love to witness the changing demographics of our buyers.

They come from all ages and all over the world. We have concrete trucks traveling all over to pour foundations when and where they are needed. We may have four basements scheduled one right after the other, and they might not even be side by side, and somehow the driver pulls up, starts pouring the concrete while other trades show up to raise roof trusses, install walls ... the

walks of life, the whole gambit of nationalities, and our communities are living, breathing examples of the multiculturalism that makes Canada so vibrant. I also marvel at how well our staff, suppliers and trades of various cultures and backgrounds work together to bring our new homes and communities to life. We are truly at the leading edge of multiculturalism, and I am very proud of that.

This brings me to another thing that fascinates me about the new home building industry: the complexity of the process and how well it works. Recently, I took some visitors to Richmond Hill to see some of our stacked town-

homes going up. The amount of activity was exciting, and it reminded me again of how intricate the scheduling has to be for all of the materials and trades.

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list goes on. There is an order as to how things are done during the building of a new home, so you can only imagine how complicated it can get with people buying at different stages.

The bottom line is that in order for builders to provide good service to our buyers, we have to rely on good service from our suppliers and trades — and that's what we get. Of course, there is a glitch now and then, but for the most part, everything hums along well.

From the time potential buyers enter our sales centres right through to after they move in,

builders need to provide good service, and we should be able to rely on that from everyone. For example, as builders, we need our municipal governments to provide the information and approvals that keep our industry running smoothly.

For municipalities, we builders and developers are customers who pay tremendous amounts in development charges and building fees. If everyone at City Hall would answer calls and emails in a timely fashion, it would go a long way to creating a parallel to what happens in our industry. We may not always get the answers we want, but at least we'd know where we stand. There is a lot of good being done by municipal government; however, there is room for improvement.

Good service is about communication, and as builders, we keep the lines

of communication open with our customers. We want them to be happy with their home purchases as much as they do. This brings me to the best thing about being a builder — enjoying the satisfaction of driving and walking through our completed communities. Creating people's homes and communities is noble work, and there is nothing more gratifying than seeing neighbourhoods where trees are maturing, beautiful homes line the streetscapes and families are interacting, laughing and chatting. I love what I do!

— Hugh Heron is Principal and Partner in the Heron Group of Companies, President of Heathwood Homes and Chair of The Mikey Network, 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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