

Relocation Specialist Welcomes Toronto's Executive Newcomers

by Kara Kurylłowicz

Lizanne Dobson loves helping executives relocate to Toronto from across Canada, the U.S. and overseas, because it's the perfect opportunity to share her passion for the city as well as her real-estate specific knowledge.

What's driving international interest in Toronto?

Right now, Toronto is a highly desirable city in one of the world's most stable countries with a superb standard of living, outstanding cultural mix and one of the strongest banking systems in the world. As a result, there is a real influx of foreign investors, senior business executives, sports and entertainment figures.

According to The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014, Toronto continues to rank among the top five most livable cities in the world. Toronto is also Canada's chief economic powerhouse with six million regional inhabitants and 40% of the nation's business headquarters, nearly a fifth of Canada's GDP and 45% of Ontario's GDP. The GTA is also a main manufacturing hub with major firms in the automotive, biomedical and computer/electronics sectors. In addition, 40% of Canada's jobs are located in Toronto and 40% of the entire North American population lives within a day's drive of central Ontario.

To top it off, Canada is the #1 country in the G-7 and ranked in the top five in the world in which to do business and has been ranked #1 for the soundest banking system in the world for seven years in a row.

Toronto and Canada are exactly where a lot of up and comers want to be!

What does relocation typically involve with your clients?

Most of my relocation clients are moving to Toronto from the U.S., often New York, and various cities in California, to take advantage of a terrific job opportunity. I've recently helped a Toronto-based medical start-up find homes for 11 top executives who plan to stay in the city for three to five years. I refer them to U.S. agents to get their stateside home sold or leased and help them decide whether they want to lease or buy here in the GTA.

I also support clients that want to relocate to second homes in sunnier climes to escape Toronto winters with referrals to





agents and service providers in hot spots such as Florida, Arizona, Mexico and Costa Rica.

Is there a particular challenge you face with relocation clients?

There are two predominant challenges: managing their price expectations and working with the fact they know virtually nothing about Toronto lifestyles let alone the city itself. As a result, when working with relocation clients, particularly non-Canadians, I am as much a tour guide and lifestyle coach as a realtor. They help me see Toronto through a different lens that makes me appreciate our city even more.

I love being part of such a positive, significant life event that is so ripe with opportunity and adventure! As excited as they are at the prospect of the move, they often underestimate the size, sophistication and cost of Toronto which means I regularly deal with sticker shock. Of course, I remind them that the home they buy or lease here will be in one of the world's safest and cleanest cities with an extraordinary range of cultural, recreational and sports amenities. In addition, I show them exactly how much most Toronto real estate has appreciated over the years and that investing in Toronto has its rewards.

What do you offer relocation clients?

In essence, I become their relocation concierge!

My relocation process starts with a detailed phone interview to get a sense of their current lifestyle, expectations and budget. I use that information to plan the initial tour with visits to five or six properties in Toronto's west, central and east ends as well as a welcome package. This gives them a sense of what their budget will buy and provides valuable insights into the various neighbourhoods.

The primary goal is to get to know them while showing them Toronto and a handful of prospective properties. I recognize that if I show them too much too quickly, it would be overwhelming. Because this tour often occurs

before they sign any employment contract, it has to be an outstandingly positive experience. I'm very cognisant that newcomers are starting the process without a fundamental awareness of what Toronto is all about and everything this great city has to offer. I rely on my conversations with them to identify their lifestyle and housing requirements and match them with the appropriate Toronto neighbourhoods.

As with all of my clients—I ask the right questions and really listen to make the best possible Toronto match for them. For example, if they're used to walking to work in their city of origin, accustomed to a one-hour highway or a 30-minute transit commute—I have to determine which Toronto pockets offer that within their budget and in relation to their workplace. Of course, we also consider proximity to schools if they have children and airport access if they are frequent flyers etc...After the tour, I set up an MLS profile based on their feedback so that they can consider prospective homes while they ponder and plan for the move.

Once they've signed on the dotted line and confirmed the move to Toronto, we plan their next visit and make any necessary adjustments.

Relocating to a new city is much more complex than simply finding a new home so beyond property and move-related information, I offer insights on schools, OHIP, the quickest, easiest way to get your Ontario driver's license and connect to utilities. I also provide a detailed countdown checklist to help them have a smooth move.

Each relocation is different. I've occasionally had to help my clients lease a place sight unseen, or buy a home before their spouse has seen more than the photos and video clips! So far everyone has been very happy with their new home in Toronto!

Why are your personal connections and relationships so important to relocation clients?

We're all most comfortable with referrals from people that we know!

My personal connections and referrals help them feel confident and comfortable with the move, while also saving them research time and reducing the risk of a bad experience.

Whatever product or service they require, from a cleaner to daycare, a new gym or a painter, a restaurant or a financial advisor that specializes in cross-border transactions and financing, my personal recommendations are based on my experiences as well as those of my network.

What else sets you apart as a relocation specialist?

When I learned that between 2005 and 2014, Canada showed a 43% increase in high net worth individuals (with increases of 63% and 66% in the U.S. and globally) I earned Keller-Williams' Global Property Specialist and Luxury designations. This benefits my clients because I'm better able to relate to these international, luxury home buyers and get access to databases that help me pre-qualify incoming American and international buyers for my local sellers.

This niche market presents unparalleled opportunities across my networks and all over Toronto.

Toronto is a spectacular city and a wonderful place to live so helping them make our city their new home is as much fun as it is rewarding.

Questions? Have a friend planning to move to Toronto? Get in touch with Lizanne via the contact information below.



Lizanne Dobson

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A realtor since 2001 and a member of Keller Williams Neighbourhood Realty for three years, Lizanne has strategically maximized her access to relevant, real-estate data and insights while leveraging the power of Keller Williams' local, national and worldwide connections. Every year, Lizanne and her clients benefit from the annual Keller Williams' "Family Reunion" conference where more than 12,000 agents share key information about best practises, consumer behaviours, economic indicators and real estate data for Canada and the U.S. to better meet clients' needs. Currently North America's largest brokerage by agent count, Keller Williams' 100,000 agents worldwide benefit from its vast network and industry-renowned training.

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