

TitlePLUS consumer campaigns reach millions

Millions of Ontario consumers know a lot more today about home buying, the role of their real estate lawyer and TitlePLUS title insurance: That's because real estate lawyers in Ontario played a starring role in a major campaign launched by TitlePLUS in 2006 to educate consumers about the important role of a professional real estate lawyer in conveyancing.

The result: A record-breaking 2006 for the TitlePLUS program. And a foundation on which the real estate bar can build additional campaigns to reinforce the value of a lawyer in a real estate transaction.

Ads speak frankly

Things can and do go wrong when you buy a home: And the best way to protect yourself against this possibility is to use both a real estate lawyer and TitlePLUS title insurance in a purchase transaction.

This was the consistent message in a series of TitlePLUS ads that ran in major daily newspapers from Thunder Bay to Windsor and Ottawa – and major points in between – in spring and summer 2006. Complementing the print campaign was a radio ad campaign that encouraged listeners to seek advice from a professional real estate lawyer and to ask for TitlePLUS insurance when closing on a transaction.

The ad campaign also directed consumers to a new TitlePLUS tool: *The Real Simple Real Estate Guide* – a consumer-oriented website that includes numerous tools such as mortgage



calculators, “to do” checklists, information on the role of a real estate lawyer, and information on TitlePLUS insurance.

To date more than 50,000 people have visited the site (www.titleplus.ca/RSREG). Close to 10 per cent of those visiting the site click through to the “Locate a Lawyer” link that lets visitors find a TitlePLUS lawyer in their area or who is associated with a specific development project.

Media/consumer education campaign

The first step in the campaign was an omnibus survey of consumers who had bought a home in the last five years. Decima Research asked a random sampling of homebuyers why they used a lawyer, how they selected the lawyer handling the transaction, and the extent of their knowledge of title insurance and

its role. Key results of that survey were as follows:

- Only about 10 per cent of consumers see their lawyer as a counselor or advisor in the transaction, and only one per cent say the lawyer can help them save money;
- Although close to 100 per cent of recent transactions were title-insured, only 50 per cent of those participating in the survey knew that they had obtained title insurance and more than 30 per cent said they did not know what title insurance was.

The subsequent media relations campaign focused on providing consumers with tips and insights into what they could expect their lawyer to do.

Through media releases and interviews, Kathleen Waters, vice-president, TitlePLUS, talked about the need for a qualified real

estate lawyer, essential steps in buying a home, and some key questions to ask when choosing a lawyer.

The media/public education campaign generated extensive media coverage:

- A *Canadian Press* column on the hidden costs of homebuying (and the need for a contingency fund) was picked up by papers as far away as Regina and Vancouver, as well as by major papers in Ontario markets and the CBC website.
- The *Toronto Star* ran several articles on the research results and the importance of a lawyer.
- Television talk shows in several GTA and southwestern Ontario locations

featured interviews with Kathleen Waters based on the research findings and the role of title insurance.

- Legal and insurance trade press (including *Lawyers Weekly*) carried information on the TitlePLUS campaigns.

To capitalize on this media interest, TitlePLUS launched a second media campaign in the fall of 2006 that focused on educating condominium buyers about some of the issues they should be aware of – and how a real estate lawyer can help buyers avoid some common pitfalls. CITY-TV (Breakfast Television), the *Hamilton Spectator*, *Canadian Press*, *Yahoo Finance* and other media outlets picked up the story. Exhibiting at a major

Toronto condo show later in the year enabled TitlePLUS to reinforce its presence among condominium buyers and owners: More than 5,000 people visited the TitlePLUS booth and took away information on the TitlePLUS program and other information materials.

According to Environics Communications, the agency retained to conduct and track the media campaigns, the print articles and television interviews were read or seen by close to nine million people (based on printed circulation and audience numbers). Plans are underway to build on the momentum of this education effort in conjunction with the Working Group on Lawyers and Real Estate (a CDLPA-OBA-ORELA initiative) in 2007.



TitlePLUS – a perfect 10!

To mark the tenth anniversary of the TitlePLUS program, LAWPRO is celebrating with a Tenth Anniversary TitlePLUS Conference from May 6 to 7, 2007, in the Niagara Falls, Ontario area. TitlePLUS also is participating at various events across the province throughout 2007. Mark your calendars and watch for more information in the coming months.

The TitlePLUS program was launched in 1997 to support the real estate bar and to counter the introduction of American-style title insurance models. The TitlePLUS program is the only “all Canadian” and “Bar-Related™” title insurance program operating in Canada.

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