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CONDOS

BOARDS RULE

Yes, the board can secretly pass new rules. *PH4*

DECOR

MID CENTURY

If the furniture's too pricey, go with the textiles. *PH4*

OUTSIDE

PATIO PARTY POP

Sub out the paper plates, coffee shop napkins. *PH5*



Hannah and Aidan Fraser hit the pool last weekend.

HEATHER DOUGLAS
PHOTOGRAPHY

A QUANTUM LEAP

Cottage life is cool, but resort life offers a whole other level of chill *By Iris Benarolia*

Oh, will you look at that! The dock is rotting, the lawn is so overgrown it's probably hiding a colony of snakes and the septic toilet has gone haywire. *Again.* There goes the weekend. Better corral your crabby children to help with the chores.

That scenario roughly describes what Glenn Fraser, an accountant in Toronto, wanted to avoid when he was looking for a cottage for his family his wife, Jean, and their kids, Hannah, 12, and Aidan, 10.

I hear my friends complaining all the time. They go to the cottage and they return exhausted, Fraser says. They're constantly repairing this or checking on that, which is why

we wanted a newer, turnkey place.

(The term turnkey, incidentally, can simply mean a home is move in ready, but in this instance Fraser is referring to wanting a cottage that generates cash flow through rental income. More on that later.)

In 2011, the Frasers bought a four bedroom villa at Muskoka Bay Club (muskokabayclub.com). They liked the turnkey aspect—the fact that everything was brand new and ready to use—which would translate to a relaxing vacation, and that the site offered activities right outside their door, so the family could finally escape their hectic city life to spend time together.

Developed by Freed Develop

ments, the four season getaway on 850 acres has an 18 hole golf course designed by acclaimed golf architect Doug Carrick.

Buyers can live the lifestyle Peter Freed established with his refined King West condo buildings—but in a sophisticated clutch of cottage real estate, where the lofts are priced at \$329,900 to \$399,900; homes start at \$464,900 to more than \$1 million and villas are priced at \$459,900 to more than \$600,000.

Fraser has owned his villa for four years, and still calls it one of the best decisions we've ever made. Our cottage is great because we've got room for our friends to visit. We even built a screened in Muskoka room

downstairs off the basement.

With their maintenance fee, they pay Muskoka Bay Club to take care of cutting the lawn and keeping the driveways and the roads in tip top shape, Fraser says, praising a rental system that helps with costs.

That was a big consideration for us, he says. If we bought a traditional cottage, would we get bang for our buck [since it would be sitting empty for part of the season]? This way, it's ideal. We're going up this weekend and all the beds will be made [by the Muskoka Bay Club team]. It will be spic and span and there will be a rental cheque waiting for us, not literally, but figuratively.

See RESORT on Page PH3

“ Muskoka is one of the most beautiful parts of the world You can get to Simcoe from Toronto in 45 minutes, but an extra hour drive takes you to a different world. Once you hit the Canadian Shield and the topography gets wild, it's a whole other feel □ *Peter Freed*, developer

ARRIVE AND UNPLUG

RESORT

Continued from Page PH1

The ownership structure also engenders community spirit, Fraser says. It's not a fractional thing, or a cottage we're renting. You get to know like minded people and form friendships.

For Fraser, that fuzzy feel good vibe has become part of cottage life, though most of the time the social circle is his own family and he loves it. We're together 90 per cent of the time. We drive there, open up the door and relax and bond.

The Frasers can be found on the golf course or playing tennis. There is also an infinity edge pool, a children's pool and play area, a gym and a spa at the 17,000 square foot cliff top clubhouse, where you can have a civilized meal with a glass of wine while gazing over elegantly sweeping fairways.

It's not exactly what most people equate with going to the cottage, but this is resort style real estate, after all. It's not about dock maintenance, it's about personal maintenance. And why not? Don't we work enough as it is in the city? Can't we stop this cultish devotion to productivity while on vacation?

According to Freed himself, who is so smitten with Muskoka he's helping develop nearby Touchstone on Lake Muskoka, too, the setting itself should be distraction enough from work.

Muskoka is one of the most beautiful parts of the

world, he says. It's a majestic environment.

Growing up, Freed was never a hardcore cottage type. I went to friends' cottages, mainly on Lake Simcoe. But you know, it felt like a house on the lake, not the classic cottage.

Lake Simcoe was nice, he says. You can get there from Toronto in 45 minutes, but an extra hour drive takes you to a different world, to Muskoka. Once you hit the Canadian Shield and the topography gets wild and changes, it's a whole other feel.

Which is one reason *Nation al Geographic* named Muskoka among the best places to visit in both 2011 and 2012, lauding its 8,699 miles of shoreline, 17 historic towns and villages, waterfalls galore and lakes bordered by the granite peaks of Algonquin Provincial Park to the east and the 30,000 islands of Georgian Bay Islands National Park to the west.

There are also old classic hotels to visit and restaurants on the various lakes, Freed says. Muskoka makes you feel like you've gone to resort country.

But owning a traditional waterfront cottage there isn't always feasible. Freed compares the situation in Muskoka to The Hamptons where the uber wealthy can afford a \$5 million or \$10 million home on the water that's out of reach for 99.9 per cent of the population.

Resort condominiums are a fantastic option, he says. You get an exceptionally high

quality of lifestyle, at a much lower cost.

Touchstone on Lake Muskoka (touchstoneresort.com) is also offering buyers a variety of wholly owned lakeside condos and a maintenance free lifestyle in a sublime setting.

Robert McLaughlin, Touchstone CEO and president, says, We use three words to describe it: arrive, unplug, relax. Everything is looked after that is the No. 1 advantage to the property.

It's the opposite of the typical trappings of the cottage, which can be a lot of work and take up your entire weekend, he says.

Set on 23 acres with 1,100 feet of shoreline, the next phases at Touchstone will feature six new buildings on the water with Muskoka style architecture by Ava Janikowski Architect that harmoniously blend into the environment (as opposed to contemporary glass structures).

Phase 1 is already sold out and consists of 33 condominium units. Phases 2 and 3 will offer another 66 furnished units.

The topography ranges from meadowlands to white sandy beaches to cliff tops to villas perched over the water, making it a unique place, McLaughlin says.

Boathouse villas, near the boat slips and up on that perch McLaughlin mentioned, are priced from \$229,000 to \$1,159,900 while beachfront villas, closer to the shore, sell from \$489,900 to \$729,000.



FREED DEVELOPMENTS

A casual but upscale vibe in the suites brings a little bit of the city to cottage country.

Or picture unwinding in one of the treetop penthouses, which McLaughlin describes as the most exclusive offering over looking Lake Muskoka with beautiful views. These sell for \$1,059,900 to \$1,299,900.

Best of all, the condos don't sit idle when empty. A rental initiative will assist owners to help cover some of their costs. Your property becomes an investment to earn some income when you are not using it, McLaughlin says. There is a minimum number of weeks owners are required to put their unit in the rental program.

In many ways, Touchstone is similar to Muskoka Bay Club, especially its architectural features. In fact, the two properties share a lot in common, from amenities to chic interior finishes, so it's no surprise they've joined forces by

bringing in Freed.

We wanted to partner with someone who understands Muskoka, who understands development and who, above all, stands for quality and lifestyle, which is absolutely key, McLaughlin says.

The simpatico relationship will be a big plus for owners on both sides. We'd like to have a boat service between the two properties throughout the summer, so if I'm a current or new owner I can take advantage of golf if I'm staying at Touchstone. Or if I'm staying at Muskoka Bay I can enjoy an amazing meal at Touchstone. It extends your experience, McLaughlin says.

As far as how they're faring, We're already 30 per cent pre sold, he says. They're going very well and we're very pleased. The advantage we

have is that because Phase 1 is built out, potential purchasers can come out and stay and use the facilities and really get a true understanding of what Touchstone is all about.

Visit the restaurant, boat house or spa on the five star property, he says. Or admire the interior finishes by Moncur Design Associates: The spiffy rooms are furnished with stainless steel appliances, bath rooms with soaker tubs and modern furniture to rival most city homes.

Outdoors, follow the landscaped walkways and savour the same uninterrupted views of the water you get from your condo.

Is that patch of white sandy beach taken? Why, of course it's not. Go on — slack off, why don't you.

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