



## A DREAM TEAM THIRTY YEARS IN THE MAKING *by Ellen Baragon*

October 5, 2017

Dennis Wilson and Paul Cowhig's careers have been running parallel for 30 years, so it's no surprise they're now working side by side to raise the professional standards and reputations of Fraser Valley REALTORS®. Both men studied and were licensed around the same time, both had memberships in the Vancouver and Fraser Valley boards, both served as Presidents of FVREB, both have broker licenses, and both were long-term volunteers for the Business Practices committee.

As recently announced, Paul has joined the Professional Standards team at the Board as Professional Standards Advisor, working alongside Dennis, our Professional Standards Manager of more than ten years.

In many ways, these two seasoned pros are a dream team for the Board at this critical point in the history of organized real estate.

Dennis and Paul have been friendly colleagues for decades, although their personal styles are quite different, so naturally there's some gentle teasing between them.

*“We respect and like each other and while it’s not always easy to change either of our minds on something, in the end, we’re both open to it. That’s why we’re a good team,” explains Paul. “Also, we both have a passion about ethics and professional standards.”*

Dennis agrees. “We’re different people, Paul and I, no question about that. We disagree at times, but I love that. It’s stimulating and challenging, and it’s a sign of respect because frankly, there’s no competition between us.”

Back in 2007 Dennis wasn’t even looking for a job when a head hunter sent him an email that outlined an entirely new role at the FVREB.

“I had a good business with a great client base that I had developed over 25 years. I was teaching on the side. I was volunteering on the Business Practices committee, which I enjoyed. Heck, I was having a ball!” Dennis recalls.

“But when I opened up the email and read the job description, I just started laughing, because I knew right away, I was in trouble. Professionalism in this business had been my passion all along and now I was being asked to consider this amazing opportunity.”

The job matched Dennis to a tee, and it would be the launch of the first Professional Standards team at the FVREB. He never looked back. At that time Dennis was one of only two people holding such a position in a Canadian real estate board.

Meanwhile Paul had been elected to the Fraser Valley Board of Directors in 1996, which he says gave him a far greater appreciation for the function of real estate boards and governance.

“It’s when I was first elected that I discovered a whole other side of this business,” says Paul referring to business practices. “It gave me a deeper understanding of why some things have to be done a certain way. It energized me and I was naturally drawn to it.”

Dennis’ knowledge, experience and ethical standards were a big draw for Paul when this summer he learned there was a new position opening up in the Professional Standards department of the FVREB. He ultimately made the decision to leave his job at the Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board (OMREB) where he was the Professional Standards Coordinator.

“I loved my job at OMREB but the prospect of working with Dennis was very attractive to me,” Paul says. “I saw an opportunity to do something here with Dennis that I could never have done alone.”

The fact that Paul has family on the Lower Mainland sealed the deal for him.

Paul will take over a major chunk of the work Dennis has traditionally handled and will be the “go to” guy who responds to complaints from both the public and Realtors, gathers information, talks to complainants, brokers and Realtors to determine if an issue can be handled quickly by staff, through a mediation, or if there’s cause, send the complaint to the Business Practices committee.

Dennis remains head of Professional Standards and with a welcome shift in the workload, he’s looking forward to having more time to dig into course development, policy and support for brokers.

*“There’s so many things in professionalism that need to be worked on that I have not had time for, and now I have that time,” says Dennis. “There is a huge need in the broker world to have support in professionalism, and to have their own training and go-to person. That’s something I’d like to see happen.”*

Paul is also interested in promoting education and awareness not only for Realtors but for the general public as well. At the end of day, Paul is optimistic that their teamwork will drive change and support for professional standards.

“I think our efforts in education will raise standards for the public and also reduce complaints against Realtors,” he says. “That’s the hope.”