



SASKATCHEWAN'S HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CONTINUES TO EBB AND FLOW: RBC ECONOMICS

TORONTO, August 27, 2013 — Saskatchewan's housing affordability continued its seesaw pattern of recent years in the second quarter of 2013, according to the latest [Housing Trends and Affordability Report](#) issued today by RBC Economics Research.

Alternating between increases and declines from quarter to quarter, Saskatchewan has experienced a fairly flat trend in affordability since 2009 and maintained levels close to historical averages.

“With little affordability pressures acting as a restraint, Saskatchewan homebuyers sprung into action in the second quarter of this year, boosting resales nearly 14 per cent relative to the first quarter. In particular, Saskatoon and Regina enjoyed notable gains,” said Craig Wright, senior vice-president and chief economist, RBC. “We expect the province's strong labour market and population growth will continue to support housing demand in the short-term.”

The RBC housing affordability measures, which capture the province's proportion of pre-tax household income needed to service the costs of owning a home at market values, rose modestly for the single-family homes categories in the second quarter of 2013 (an increase in the measure represents deterioration in affordability).

RBC measures rose by 0.9 percentage points to 37.2 per cent for bungalows and by 0.5 percentage points to 40.8 per cent for two-storey homes, largely offsetting declines in the first quarter. The measure for condominiums inched lower by 0.3 percentage points to 25.0, further reversing increases that occurred in late 2012.

RBC's housing affordability measure for the benchmark detached bungalow in Canada's largest cities is as follows: Vancouver 82.1 per cent (up 2.2 percentage points from the previous quarter); Toronto 54.5 per cent (up 0.5 percentage points); Montreal 38.1 (down 0.7 percentage points); Ottawa 37.1 (up 0.5 percentage points); Edmonton 34.0 (up 1.8 percentage points); Calgary 33.0 (unchanged).

The RBC Housing Affordability Measure, which has been compiled since 1985, is based on the costs of owning a detached bungalow (a reasonable property benchmark for the housing market in Canada) at market value. Alternative housing types are also presented, including a standard two-storey home and a standard condominium apartment. The higher the reading, the more difficult it is to afford a home at market values. For example, an affordability reading of 50 per cent means that homeownership costs, including mortgage payments, utilities and property taxes, would take up 50 per cent of a typical household's monthly pre-tax income.

Highlights from across Canada:

- [British Columbia](#): affordability takes one step back

Homeownership of single-family homes in the province became less affordable in the second quarter of 2013 amid a surge in resale activity since early spring following a near two-year long cooling stretch. RBC measures rose by 1.1 percentage points for bungalows, by 0.8 percentage points for two-storey homes, and by only 0.1 percentage points for condominiums.

- [Alberta](#): homeownership remains relatively affordable

Owning a home in Alberta continued to be relatively affordable for provincial homebuyers despite some increases in ownership costs in the past two quarters. RBC's affordability measures for the province rose between 0.1 and 0.7 percentage points across all housing types in the second quarter; yet, levels still stood below their long-term averages.

- [Manitoba](#): housing affordability a mixed bag

The province's second quarter housing affordability developments proved to be a mixed bag with RBC's measure for the two-storey home category rising by 1.8 percentage points, the measure for bungalows down slightly by 0.2 percentage points, and the measure for condominiums edging up by 0.2 percentage points.

- [Ontario](#): steady as she goes

There was little change in housing affordability in Ontario in the second quarter. RBC's measures for both bungalows and two-storey homes rose by 0.2 percentage points relative to the first quarter, while the measure for condominiums remained flat.

- [Quebec](#): bucking the deteriorating affordability trend

The Quebec housing market bucked the national trend by enjoying a broad-based improvement in affordability in the second quarter. RBC affordability measure for the province fell by 0.5 percentage points for bungalows and 0.4 percentage points for condominiums; the measure for two-storey homes remained unchanged.

- [Atlantic Canada](#): affordability stuck in neutral

Atlantic Canada's housing affordability levels remained relatively static at neutral levels in the second quarter of 2013. Affordability measures moved marginally in all categories tracked by RBC: bungalows and condominiums edged lower by 0.1 percentage points and 0.2 percentage points, respectively; two-storey homes edged up by 0.1 percentage points.

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The full RBC Housing Trends and Affordability report is available online, as of 8 a.m. ET today, at rbc.com/economics/market/.

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