



SASKATCHEWAN'S HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IMPROVES: RBC ECONOMICS

TORONTO, November 25, 2011 — Saskatchewan's housing affordability broadly improved in the third quarter of 2011, according to the latest [Housing Trends and Affordability Report](#) issued today by RBC Economics. This reverses part of the deterioration in affordability earlier in the year.

"Fuelled by strong economic growth in Saskatchewan, home resales rose nearly six per cent from the second quarter to their highest level in two years," said Robert Hogue, senior economist, RBC. "Affordability was clearly not a deterrent for Saskatchewan homebuyers. Strong housing market gains were registered in Saskatoon and, to a lesser extent, Regina."

Although homeownership costs continue to be historically high in Saskatchewan, they declined across all housing types in the third quarter. Home prices in the province maintained their steady ascent, with modest appreciation for most housing types.

The RBC housing affordability measures for Saskatchewan, which capture the province's proportion of pre-tax household income needed to service the costs of owning a home, decreased across all housing types in the third quarter of 2011 (a decrease represents a gain in affordability). The measure for the benchmark detached bungalow in the province fell to 38.9 per cent (a decrease of 0.8 percentage points from the previous quarter), the standard condominium to 26.3 per cent (down 0.8 percentage points) and the standard two-storey home to 42.0 per cent (down 0.9 percentage points). This reverses some of the increases seen in the previous quarter.

"Looking ahead to next year, Saskatchewan's strong economic growth will continue to support the province's housing market," added Hogue.

RBC's housing affordability measure for the benchmark detached bungalow in Canada's largest cities is as follows: Vancouver 90.6 per cent (down 1.5 percentage points from the previous quarter), Toronto 52.1 per cent (up 0.1 percentage points), Montreal 40.9 per cent (down 1.3 percentage points), Ottawa 40.8 per cent (down 0.6 percentage points), Calgary 37.6 per cent (up 0.5 percentage points) and Edmonton 33.2 per cent (down 0.6 percentage points).

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. Alternative housing types are also presented including a standard two-storey home and a standard condominium. The higher the reading, the more costly it is to afford a home. For example, an affordability reading of 50 per cent means that homeownership costs, including mortgage payments, utilities and property taxes, take up 50 per cent of a typical household's monthly pre-tax income.

Highlights from across Canada:

- **British Columbia**: The combination of moderate declines in mortgage rates and softer prices for some housing types made it slightly more affordable to own a home in British Columbia in the third quarter. The RBC Affordability measures for British Columbia decreased between 0.3 and 1.2 percentage points in the quarter, but remain well above historical norms. The poor affordability picture in British Columbia will continue to weigh on local housing demand.
 - Vancouver continues to experience sky-high home prices, even though the RBC affordability measures fell between 1.5 percentage points and 0.8 percentage points. Current market prices continue to weigh on local homebuyers, as home ownership costs remain well above historical norms.
- **Alberta**: Impressive gains in Alberta's economy contributed to a stronger provincial housing market in the third quarter of this year. Home resales and housing starts reached their highest levels in over a year, thanks to renewed demand for housing in the province. RBC affordability measures for Alberta remained mostly unchanged and the lowest among the provinces in the third quarter.
 - Affordability measures in Calgary deteriorated slightly for most housing types in the third quarter, rising between 0.2 and 0.5 percentage points. Nonetheless, Calgary-area homebuyers continue to benefit from attractive affordability, which remained the best among Canada's major cities.
- **Manitoba**: Housing affordability continues to be attractive in Manitoba, showing some of the most significant improvements in the country in the third quarter. The RBC measures for two-storey homes fell 1.5 percentage points, while the measures for detached bungalows declined by 1.2 per cent and for condominium apartments by 0.8 percentage points. Homebuyers took advantage of the greater affordability in the third quarter and boosted home resales by 5.3 per cent.
- **Ontario**: Ontario's housing affordability experienced very little change in the third quarter of 2011. Condominium apartments were the only housing type to see any movement, with the RBC measure decreasing by a mere 0.1 percentage point. Affordability in Ontario stands just slightly worse than the historical average in the province. Home resales in Ontario increased at a robust 3.8 per cent rate. Market activity in Ontario is balanced at the moment, and home prices are increasing at a steady yet moderate pace. The number of homes for sale in Ontario is on the rise, which will likely slow the pace of property appreciation in the period ahead.
 - The Toronto area remains a sellers market even as RBC measures clearly stand above long-term averages for the area. In the third quarter, measures for Toronto were little changed, increasing by a mere 0.1 percentage point for detached bungalows, declining by 0.3 percentage points for two-storey homes and staying flat for condominiums.
 - Ottawa measures decreased over all housing types in the third quarter from 0.2 to 0.6 percentage points. The earlier cooling in market activity in the area has almost entirely reversed in the latest period, as home resales rebounded by eight per cent.

- **Quebec:** RBC measures for Quebec declined between 0.1 and 1.4 percentage points, reversing some of the back-to-back deteriorations in affordability seen in the first and second quarters. All measures in Quebec stand slightly above their long-term averages, and more so in the case of standard two-storey homes, corresponding to a moderate strain in affordability in the province.
 - Montreal's affordability measure for standard two-storey homes fell the most among Canada's largest cities in the third quarter, dropping by 2.3 percentage points. The measure for detached bungalows also fell substantially (by 1.3 percentage points), while condominium affordability was largely unchanged (a marginal increase of 0.1 percentage points). Despite the improvement in the latest period, the Montreal-area market still faces some stress, as affordability levels continue to be somewhat worse than they have historically been, on average.
- **Atlantic Canada:** Atlantic Canada's housing market continues to be among the most affordable in Canada, with further modest improvements in the third quarter: the RBC measures eased between 0.4 and 0.6 percentage points. Although many markets in New Brunswick have displayed signs of cooling in the last two quarters amid deterioration in the province's labour market, overall, home resales increased marginally in the region. With slow economic growth projected in Atlantic Canada next year, housing trends are likely to remain largely stable in the region.

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

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