

OUSING MARKET

Ottawa

OUTLOOK

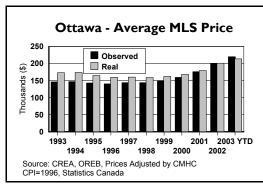
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ISSUE: FALL 2003

Resale Market

Home Prices Continue to Climb in 2003

The average price for a resale home in Ottawa continues to climb following a record breaking year in 2002. By the end of August 2003, the average year-to-date MLS price for a home was pegged at around \$218,600, an increase of over nine per cent from the year-to-date price of \$200,500 back in August 2002.

Looking back at annual price growth shows that after several lean years in the mid-1990s, home prices in Ottawa have since continued to climb at healthy rates. Housing prices have grown not only in nominal terms but in real terms, recovering from the loss in value in the last decade. By late 2002, we witnessed the highest price growth ever after adjusting for inflation. Such strong price appreciation delights existing home homeowners and investors in real estate, but will certainly have an



impact on those considering the purchase of a home. Low mortgage rates at present continue to make it affordable for home buyers, and the carrying costs for an average mortgage are already lower than they were during the same period a year ago. However, longer term rates are expected to rise into 2004 and this looming prospect will likely impact the ability for some consumers to purchase a home over the next year. Consequently, affordability will continue to be a factor in this market for the rest of 2003 and 2004.

The most important consideration of this strong price growth is whether it can be sustained over the next few years. When we consider the factors supporting demand and the current supply of homes, clearly market fundamentals are still in place

to support the housing market in the future. Strong job gains over the past year and low interest rates will continue to buoy demand for housing. Meanwhile, though the number of listing is growing, it by no means suggests an over supply of homes in the market. Finally, price growth is no longer at the feverish pace it was in 2002, which is already an

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indication that pressure in the market is easing and prices will now be achieving a more sustainable pace of growth for this area.

Market fundamentals expected to remain strong

The nine per cent growth year-todate in housing prices normally

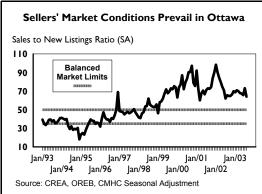


CMHC Ottawa, Market Analysis Christian Douchant, Robin Wiebe, Joanne Henry (613) 748-5120



constitutes strong gains. However, for this market it actually represents a pulling back from the strong pace seen in 2002. Last year, prices on average surged above the double-digit range for almost every month of the year. By the end of 2002, the average MLS price rose to \$200,711 for an increase above 14 per cent. However, a decline in the rate of growth by the third quarter of this year does not signal a decline in home values.

The average price for a resale home in Ottawa is still anticipated to exceed the rate of inflation and healthy price gains are expected as indicated by the most important indicator of future price movement available in the resale market, the sales-to-new listings ratio. This ratio measures current demand over supply and is a leading indicator of price movement in the near future.



Looking at the ratio year-to-date, we see that it now stands at a raw 70 per cent. This is pointing to a condition of strong demand over supply and we can expect continued price growth over the next few months. As of August 2003, the ratio was 64 per cent seasonally adjusted, below the 73 per cent seasonally adjusted recorded the previous month but still indicating that sellers' market conditions prevail.

Though market conditions for housing are still robust, there is evidence that conditions are beginning to soften as lighter sales and an increasing supply will translate to less pressure on the market. Looking back at the whole year from January to August we see that year-to-date sales in Ottawa are

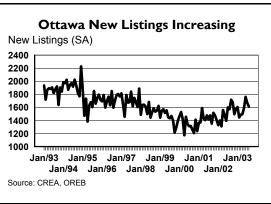
down 3.1 per cent behind last year, ending August of 2003 with 9,268 transactions compared to 2400 9,561 last year at this time. 2200 Meanwhile, listings year-to-date 2000 have increased significantly from last year, as more and more 1400 consumers are taking the 1200 opportunity of rising housing 1000 prices to put their home on the market. By this August, new listings in the Ottawa CMA increased by 8.6 per cent to about 14,400 homes on the market. This represents 19,300 units seasonally adjusted at an annual rate, a decrease of 4 percent from the previous month but still much higher than the 2002 accumulation of new listings. Consequently, we can expect that a reduction in sales coinciding with a significant increase in new listings will mitigate price growth in Ottawa for the rest of this year

A strong performing economy will mean that demand for housing will remain strong for the remainder of 2003 and well into 2004. While interest rates have been cut yet again this year - they are now around 4.2 per cent for the average one-year mortgage as of July 2003 - they are expected to increase by the end of the year and

and into next year.

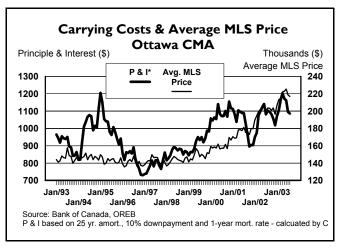
into next year as the recovering U.S. economy will likely stimulate the economy this side of the border and force up inflation. However, we are not expecting significant increases and

rates should remain competitive historically to other years. In addition, the local economy in Ottawa has been witnessing strong employment in late 2002 and 2003, where the local job market has seen approximately 25,000 new jobs added. Along with expected net positive migration to the CMA, strong job



growth and continuing competitive mortgage rates will stimulate demand for resale homes for next year.

While the factors influencing demand are very positive, we cannot ignore that rising home prices will likely affect the ability of some consumers to afford a home, especially as rising long-term interest rates in 2004 will certainly increase the carrying costs above that of the average rent for a three-bedroom apartment. In addition, an increase in the number of listings will translate into more choice for consumers and therefore help to pull in the rate of price growth of housing in Ottawa. For the rest of 2003, we can expect sales of existing homes to come below last year's record level of activity to around 12,700 for a decrease of 4 per cent from 2002. With sustained demand continuing in 2004 however, we expect sales to increase above 2003 and settle around 13,100 in 2004, an increase of just over 3 per cent. Meanwhile, increases in the average MLS price are expected to continue



rising but at about the same rate. Expect prices to grow by 9 per cent this year to around \$220,000 and by another 7 per cent next year to about \$235,000 for a resale home.

Condos continue to have highest price gains in Ottawa

Looking at price growth by housing type, condominiums have once again taken the lead this year. By July 2003, they have grown by 13 per cent year-to-date to \$162,000, well

ahead of all other housing types in Ottawa, despite a 9 per cent decline in sales from the same period a year ago. Though they will likely not achieve the staggering growth witnessed in 2002, average resale condo prices continue to surge ahead of the rest of the pack and will likely end the year at around \$166,000. Condos continue to be an attractive option for those consumers seeking affordable housing in the Ottawa market, and this is certainly stimulating demand. Investors in this housing market are also picking up condos in the resale market to take advantage of growing prices. Currently, the raw sales-to-new listing

ratio for condos now stands at around

ratio listed last year during this period.

74 per cent year-to-date, which is a

decline from the over 83 per cent

Nonetheless, the ratio is well into

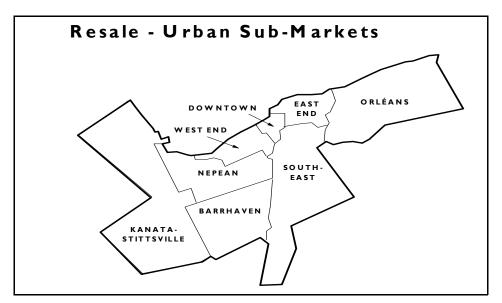
MLS Price and Sales, Urban Sub-Markets											
	Avg. Price 2003 YTD	Avg. Price 2002 YTD	, % Chg.	Sales 2003 YTD	Sales 2003 YTD	% Chg.					
Orléans	\$214,197	\$198,990	7.6	1,311	1,387	-5.5					
East End	\$187,673	\$166,145	13.0	633	727	-12.9					
South-East	\$228,309	\$209,885	-8. I	1,214	1,337	-9.2					
Downtown	\$309,102	\$281,666	9.7	623	664	-6.2					
West End	\$230,747	\$208,655	10.6	894	958	-6.7					
Nepean	\$220,853	\$202,806	8.9	760	784	-3.1					
Barrhaven	\$215,385	\$198,970	8.2	607	567	7.0					
Kanata-Stittsville	\$234,672	\$217,225	8.0	1,123	1,117	0.5					
						Source: OREB					

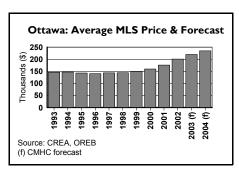
Sellers' market territory and points to continued strong price growth over the short term.

Meanwhile, the resale of single homes continues to be robust in 2003. Single homes sales are up by 1.3 per cent year-to-date to 6,217 transactions. This is the only housing type that has seen an increase in the pace of sales compared to last year's record level activity. To date, the average price for a single home has grown to about \$235,000, representing an increase of 7 per cent from a year ago at this time. While single family home sales have exceeded last year's level of activity, the sale of doubles has declined year-to-date by 13 per cent, and price growth has just been on par with inflation, growing by 3 per cent to \$224,000 year-to-date.

Downtown will record MLS price above \$300,000 in 2003

In terms of sales by neighbourhood, Barrhaven is the only area to date to have exceeded last year's pace of sales transactions. From January to July of 2003, sales increased by 7.3 per cent to 544, while the average price for a resale home mushroomed by over 7 per cent to \$215,400 year-to-date. Kanata-Stittsville is less than one per cent behind in sales at 985 year-todate and prices have grown by a very healthy 8 per cent to an average \$234,700 for a home. Interestingly, the East End has recorded the highest rate of price growth of 13 per cent, despite a significant 13 per cent decline in sales. The Downtown continues to witness the highest prices in 2003, where they have grown by just under 10 per cent to settle at an resale average price of \$306,800, and this is despite a 6.2 per cent decline in sales transactions from the same period a year ago. This means that this region of Ottawa to date has the highest rate of price growth than any other. *

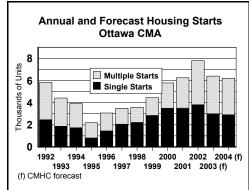




New Home Market

First Decline in Total Housing Starts in Eight Years

Ottawa is on track to record a decrease in housing starts this year, ending eight years of consecutive growth in the new housing market. After severe cutbacks in government spending and job cuts in the civil service back in 1995, the Ottawa job market took a beating and demand for housing retreated. In 1995, total starts reached a lean 2,190 units, well below the 10 year average of 4,116 units for the 1990s. Since 1995 however, the job market recovered, due to a large part to growth in high-tech but also from the return of government spending, and housing starts in Ottawa took off to meet the renewed demand for housing. The situation reached a fever pitch last year when consumers were faced with little supply of resale homes and could only turn to the new housing market to meet their housing needs. The level of activity was so strong, that the number of starts recorded last year were the highest in 14 years, 7796 units. Coming off such a feverish pace of activity, the new housing market is now showing signs of pulling



back and we expect home construction to return to a more sustained pace of activity for the rest of 2003 and 2004.

Single-detached starts drop

The number of single-detached home starts has declined by over 25 per cent form January to August of 2003 compared to the same period a year ago. While the current number of starts to date of 1,982 is well above the ten-year average for Ottawa, it does reflect that demand for new homes is softening. New home sales are a good leading indicator for new home construction, and the most current data available indicates that the sale of new single-detached homes is down by 34 per cent as of June 2003 compared to the same period last year. We also have to consider that the number of new listings in the resale market has been steadily increasing in 2003, so consumers are going to be afforded more choice for the rest of the year and into 2004. However, the strong job market in Ottawa and low interest rates will sustain demand for new housing. In addition, the move-up buyer is another factor in this market, as many consumers with a family and years of savings seek larger homes. Consequently, the demand for new single-family homes is expected to remain in place for the rest of 2003 and 2004. Expect new single-family home construction to reach about 3,000 units by the end of this year

and a small increase to about 3,200 in 2004.

Though the price for a new singledetached home continues to climb, it has definitely slowed compared to the sky rocketing pace it was last year. The new home price index by July of 2003 revealed an increase of 2.9 per cent compared to July of 2002. Last year's rate of increase by July of 2002 was over 11 per cent compared to the same period in 2001. Interestingly, the land component of the index last year showed a 2.3 per cent increase while it has only grown by less than one per cent by this July. The cost of building homes in Ottawa continues to be the most significant factor in the increase in price of new homes on the market. So far, the building component of the index has grown by 3.6 per cent year-over-year.

From January to July of 2003, the average year-to-date price for all new single-detached homes stood at around \$301,500, an increase of just under 8 per cent from the same period a year ago. The average price for a bungalow to date has actually decreased by two per cent to about \$230,400, though the median price shows a 2 per cent increase from the year before. Meanwhile, the price for a two-storey homes climbed another 11.8 per cent year-to-date to about \$315,900. The move-up market continues to drive up demand for two-storey homes and it is reflected in the price growth.

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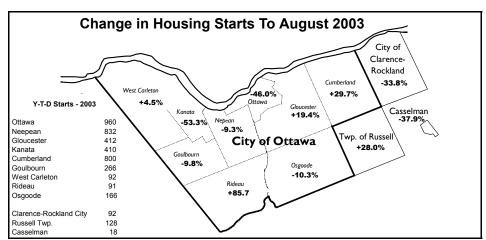
please contact Hélène Gagnon at 613-825-0055

Row and semi-detached construction remains strong

While the sale and construction of new single-detached homes has declined year-over-year, the construction of semidetached and row (townhouse) units has been strong. To date, row housing construction has grown by 15 per cent, with total starts equaling 1,517 units by the end of August. Meanwhile, semidetached units are only 3 per cent behind last year's pace, achieving 219 starts so far. As the price of homes continues to rise in Ottawa, it is not surprising that consumers in the market place will turn to more of these affordable housing options. Demand for row and semidetached homes will therefore continue to be firm for this year and going into next year. Industry will likely continue to push the development of such units because it also fits into the City of Ottawa's plan to promote more dense development within the urban limit line.

The construction of apartments is down from last year by over 54 per cent, as industry has pulled back from the surge in rental and condo construction last year. In fact, there were over 1,100 rental starts in 2002, of which 924 were apartments. This year, rental construction has only achieved just under 200 units by the eighth month of 2003. Clearly, industry is waiting for the units built since last year to be absorbed into the current market place before investing in more rental construction.

Condo construction has also been strong in 2002, where 761 new row and apartment condo units were added to the Ottawa housing market. There have been 439 new condo units as of July 2003, of which 397 units are apartment condos. More are expected to take place before the end of the year. Though the level of condo construction is down this year compared to last, it can be attributed to industry's attempt to gauge the absorption of current units before building any more. There is no evidence for now to suggest that an oversupply exists in the market. Market absorption



of such units may take longer than single-detached homes, but the current demographic characteristics of Ottawa, which include an aging population, mean that condos put on the market will eventually be purchased by perspective buyers. Demand will also be sustained by those who have turned to the real estate

market, particularly the condo market, to seek an alternative higher yielding investment opportunity to the equity markets. In terms of apartment construction, we expect 400 new rental starts this year and about 800 condo starts by the end of 2003. ❖

Higher Price Volatility Signals Change in Price Trend

"Market equilibrium" in economics is reached when buyers and sellers agree on a price for any item to be traded and the quantity of this item to be exchanged at that price. The process of reaching equilibrium is trial and error, as sellers consider buyers' bids.

The real estate market typifies this process. For instance, a rise in the supply of resale listings contributes to slower price growth, while higher sales demand helps accelerate price hikes.

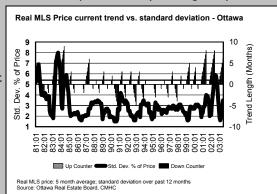
Average historic resale prices describe the market's equilibrium over time. Ottawa's average price more then tripled in 1980-2002; with only two yearly declines in 1995 and 1996. However, part of this data's description of equilibriums is muddied since inflation lifts all prices. Adjusting the observed resale for inflation, cuts "real" price growth over this period to 40 per cent, with price drops in ten years.

Buyers and sellers in the resale market continually react to changing market conditions by adjusting their bid and asking price. Accordingly, during "transition" periods, when prices are seeking a new level, price volatility should increase.

Ottawa's resale market has recently shown signs of excess demand . MLS sales have grown faster than new listings in four of the last five years, boosting both "observed" and "real" average prices.

Ottawa's resale price history demonstrates this process. "Up" and "down" spikes in the chart below count the number of consecutive months the average real resale price has moved continuously in the same direction. Higher "spikes" mean longer trends. The chart's line shows the standard deviation, a common volatility measure, of the real price. Upward line movement means more recent price volatility. Strong real price

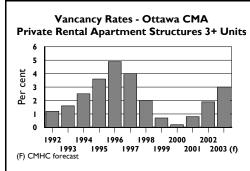
"up-trends" in 1983 and 1984 were associated with significant price volatility and subsequent price softness in 1985 and 1986. A similar pattern is emerging. Several sustained real price upticks since 2001 are associated with the highest standard deviations in the real price since 1984. Market participants are clearly searching for a new equilibrium for real prices. Less volatility should follow as this balance is neared. And, while a leveling real resale price is a distinct possibility, at worst, inflation should continue lifting observed prices.



Rental Market

Vacancy Rate is Going Up in 2003

Low mortgage rates prompted many renter households to jump into the housing market last year. Consequently, more rental units remained vacant by the time of our annual Rental Market Survey in October of 2002. The vacancy rate jumped to 1.9 per cent from the 0.8 per cent recorded back in October 2001. Until last year however, vacancy rates in Ottawa were incredibly tight and industry responded last year by initiating new rental construction projects thoughout the downtown. As mentioned above, over 1,100 rental starts took place in 2002, adding more supply to a market that is already showing signs of softening. With low interest rates still a factor in the housing market, it is expected that more renter households will likely make the transition to home owners in 2003. As a result, we can expect the vacancy rate in Ottawa to go up in 2003 to around 2.7 per cent by October of 2003. This



would still represent a balanced market for an urban centre.

Rising vacancy rates will mean that new households entering the rental market will be at a competitive advantage and should expect to see only very modest rent increases this year along with some incentives to induce them to rent.

Rents overall will only increase slightly this year. Expect the average rent for a two bedroom apartment is to go up by under 2 per cent to about \$950.

Double cohort not a factor in this market

Based on information from the University of Ottawa and Carleton University, the impact of the double cohort on the rental market will be minimal. First-year student enrollment is up by 37 per cent to an estimated 6,200 in 2003 for the University Of Ottawa; however, the university has not reported any problems finding accommodations for all students seeking shelter. The University will also be adding an additional 230 new student residences in 2004 to accommodate more first-year students. At present, the University of Ottawa has 2,700 residences on Campus, plus an additional 300 units it leases for students. As for Carleton University, first-year student enrollment is up by 20 per cent to an estimated 5,500 in 2003 from last year's 4,569 enrollment. In fact, Carleton University has recently added 400 new units to its existing 2,600 residences. Both universities have been preparing for the double cohort and built additional student accommodations in anticipation of the surge in student enrollment. However, other mitigating factors are at play, including more students staying at home for the first year of school as well as some students delaying entry into university until next year.

Landlords however can look forward to a growing 15 to 24 age group in the near future. According to Statistics Canada, this particular age cohort has grown by over 7 cent between the 1996 and 2001 Census. It can be anticipated that over 2003 and into 2004, we should see an increasing number of this age group entering the rental market as first-time renters. In addition, the job market for youth in recent months has been strong and this, in conjunction with their growing numbers, will have a positive impact on demand for rental accommodations over the next few years.

Economic Overview

Job Gains in 2003 will Keep Demand Buoyant in 2004

The rate of job growth in the Ottawa area has been very strong in 2003 compared to the rest of Ontario. To date, the economy has witnessed 13 months of consecutive year-over-year increases in new jobs. By August of 2003, the average number of people employed in Ottawa was around 464,000, representing an increase of about five per cent over the same

period in 2002. This means that an estimated 25,000 new jobs have been added to the local economy. Of the total number of new jobs, over 20,000 were in full-time employment, with the rest part-time. Job growth in the economy is expected to continue. Expect total employment to reach 467,000 by year end, for an increase of over 5 per cent from 2002.

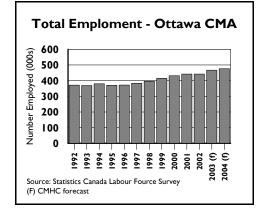
Interest and Mortgage Rates Outlook

One, three and five-year posted closed mortgage rates are expected to be in the 4.25-5.25, 5.25-6.25, and 6.00-6.75 per cent range respectively this year. The mortgage rates are forecast to rise by 0.50-0.75 per cent next year. Discounts from posted rates will be in the 0.5-1.5 per cent range.

U.S. short-term interest rates are expected to remain stable over the next two-three quarters prior to rising by 50-100 basis points in 2004. Long-term interest rates in the U.S. could rise by 25 basis points over the remainder of this year and 50-75 basis points in 2004.

The participation rate stood at 73 per cent by August, higher than all of Ontario and the highest it has been in Ottawa since July of 1990. Such a high participation rate signifies tight local labour market conditions, where we can expect increasing wages and a market increasingly forced to draw people from outside of Ottawa to fill the demand for employees. Consequently, we can expect net positive migration to this urban centre as a result of more people moving in from other provinces and within Ontario to take advantage of local job growth.

The most interesting aspect of this phenomenal job growth in Ottawa is how it has been spread out in all sectors of the economy. In terms of the service-producing sector, just under 17,000 new jobs have been recorded year-to-date compared to last year, for an increase of 4 per cent. While job growth in the retail trade and transportation whole trade have been very positive, the higher wage earning positions, such as public administration, science and technology services, and management and administration have seen significant job gains in the past year. Employment in the science and technical sector is up by 10,000 jobs or an increase of 22 per cent, while employment in management and administration is up by 7,000 jobs. In terms of the public sector, net positive job growth is still being recorded but at a much slower pace then in 2002. Back in the second half of 2002, public sector job growth was particularly robust,



growing by 15,000 new positions by the end of 2002.

Meanwhile, job gains in the goods-producing sector have also been surging ahead. By August of 2003, Statistics Canada recorded an estimated 9,000 jobs in this sector. Average weekly earnings were estimated to be around \$990, an increase of 3.7 per cent from the same period a year ago. Some key sectors with notable gains included the construction and manufacturing sectors, especially manufacturing of computers and electronics. Employment in construction is up by 6,000 jobs from last year, while manufacturing in computers and electronics is up by under 2,000 jobs. Overall, both the goods and service producing sectors have witnessed solid job gains and increase in wages.

The Ottawa economy has not only seen fantastic job growth, but incomes have grown significantly in the last few years. To get a perspective on the purchasing power of consumers in this market, a recent release of 2001 Census household characteristics by Statistics Canada identified Ottawa as having the highest household incomes in the country, scoring a median income of \$72,300. If you include the less affluent Gatineau region, the median lies around \$68,500.

Employment by age cohort is telling of the Ottawa economy. From January to July of 2003, employment levels for those between 18-24 increased by over II per cent, representing about 7,000 more employed than last year during the same period. Most of this employment was in full-time jobs. The 25 to 44 age group, the largest working age group, witnessed spectacular job growth during the same period, growing by 9 per cent to record over 21,000 more people employed a year ago. The only age group to witness declines is the 45 to 64 age cohort, which actually recorded an employment decline of about 3,500.

With all the recorded job and wage gains in Ottawa over the past three quarters of 2003, the issue is how long can the economy continue producing jobs. Is there a period of relapse over the horizon...for now it does not seem so. A recent report by Manpower Temporary Services in September of 2003 identified that over 30 per cent of those employers surveyed planned to hire in the fourth quarter of 2003. We can therefore look forward to even more job growth right until the end of the year.

In terms of relevant economic news, recent activity in the high tech industry is very reassuring for the Ottawa economy. There have been billion dollars deals signed with Nortel and a commitment to build another research centre in Ottawa, while Corel has been bought up by another company with a commitment that it will continue its line of products. In addition, the National Capital Commission (NCC) will be involved in a construction boom for the downtown according to recent news reports, building and refurbishing existing Federal government buildings over the next couple of years. Already, the NCC is involved with the current redevelopment of the Lebretton flats, which includes the building of the new Canadian War Museum.

The Ontario economy is expected to recover in 2004 from its present stalling pattern due in large part to an expected recovery in the U.S. economy. As a result, inflation is likely to go up and will likely drive interest rates higher next year. Consequently, interest rates are projected to go up in 2004 to control inflation in light of an anticipated recovery. However, long term rates are expected to fall within the 6.5 to 7.5 range. With modest increases in interest rates over the next year, net positive migration and strong job growth in the Ottawa economy will translate into firm demand for housing to continue well into 2004.

FORECAST SUMMARY

Ottawa CMA Fall 2003

2000	2001	2002	% chg.	2003F	% chg.	2004F	% chg
12,692	12,240	12,894	5.3	12,500	-3.1	12,800	2.4
\$159,511	\$175,972	\$200,711	14.1	\$220,000	9.6	\$235,000	6.8
\$173,377	\$191,763	\$216,319	12.8	\$230,400	6.5	\$242,000	5.0
\$107,958	\$124,087	\$146,755	18.3	\$166,000	13.1	\$179,500	8.1
0.79	0.71	0.72	-	0.65	-	0.60	
5,786	6,251	7,796	24.7	6,400	-17.9	6,200	-3.1
3,494	3,502	3,807	8.7	3,000	-21.2	2,900	-3.3
400	336	316	-6.0	340	7.6	300	-11.8
1,320	1,738	1,972	13.5	2,434	23.4	2,400	-1.4
572	675	1,701	152.0	626	-63.2	600	-4.2
30	285	747	162.1	300	-59.8	350	16.7
503	341	924	171.0	300	-67.5	200	-33.3
39	49	30	-38.8	26	-13.3	50	92.3
\$208,900	\$244,400	\$269,800	10.4	\$294,000	9.0	\$305,000	3.7
0.2	0.8	1.9	-	2.7	-	2.3	-
\$882	\$914	\$933	2.1	\$950	1.8	\$965	1.6
8.17	6.88	6.7		5.75		6.25	
8.35	7.41	7.45	-	6.5	-	7.0	
431,500	441,800	441,900	0.0	467,100	5.7	476,300	2.0
17,300	10,300	100		25,200	_	9,200	
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	12,692 \$159,511 \$173,377 \$107,958 0.79 5,786 3,494 400 1,320 572 30 503 39 \$208,900 0.2 \$882 8.17 8.35 431,500	12,692	12,692	12,692	12,692	12,692	12,692

Sources: Ottawa Real Estate Board; The Corporate Research Group; Statistics Canada; Human Resources Development Canada; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

The Ottawa Real Estate Board is an industry association of 1,400 sales representatives and brokers in the Ottawa area.

The OREB website is www.ottawarealestate.org

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