



REAL ESTATE OUTLOOK LIFTS CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Canadian consumer confidence surged to the highest in more than three years amid rising optimism over the outlook for real estate and the economy.

The Bloomberg Nanos Confidence Index climbed to 60.0 in the week ended April 18 from 59.0 the previous period, the highest level since March 2011. Declines in measures of job security and personal finances tempered the gain.

Buyers are returning to Canada's real-estate market after one of the harshest winters in decades. Existing home sales rose at their fastest pace in seven months in March, led by transactions in Alberta, the Canadian Real Estate Association reported recently.

"The one-week gain was largely fueled by more positive perceptions on the projected future strength of the Canadian economy and the value of real estate," said Nanos Research Group Chairman Nik Nanos. "Both of these measures were up about three percentage points in one week."

Optimism about housing reached a two-year high, with the share of respondents who see higher property values over the next six months climbing to 42.2, the highest since March 2012, according to the Nanos report.

Respondents who see the economy strengthening in the next six months rose to 25.7 percent, the greatest in more than a year, from 22.8 percent, while those who see it weaker dropped to 16.3 percent, the lowest since 2010.

The Bank of Canada said recently it continues to see a "gradual strengthening" of the world's 11th largest economy, even as it trimmed its forecast for growth this year to 2.3 percent from 2.5 percent. The country's recovery hinges on an upturn in exports and investment, the central bank said in keeping its benchmark interest rate at 1 percent.

While warning that elevated household debts represent a "significant risk," the central bank reiterated its call for Canada's housing market to make a "soft landing."

Canada's inflation rate rebounded in March as rising energy prices triggered the biggest gain in shelter costs in more than three years, Statistics Canada reported April 17. "Inflation appears to have bottomed out and we believe that it should gradually drift higher for the rest of the year," Charles St-Arnaud, Nomura Securities International Inc. senior economist, said in a research note after the report.



THE APRIL RESALE MARKET SLOW TO BLOOM

Members of the Ottawa Real Estate Board (OREB) sold 1,420 residential properties in April 2014 compared with 1,569 in April 2013, an decrease of 9.5 percent. There were 1,189 home sales in March 2014.

"There has been a decrease in units sold on a year-to-date comparison of 3.9 percent, but the Ottawa market continues to remain relatively stable" said OREB's President. "With typical 'spring' weather beginning a lot later this year, it is not unexpected to see the market have a later upswing than normal. That being said, properties sold in April were on the market an average of 45 days, a few days less than what was indicated in March", he added.

The average sale price of residential properties, including condominiums, sold in April in the Ottawa area was \$374,015, an increase of 0.8 percent over April 2013. The average sale price for a condominium-class property was \$258,500, a decrease of 3.0 per cent over April 2013. The average sale price of a residential-class property was \$399,541, an increase of 0.9 percent over April 2013.

"Sales have continued at a steady pace upwards since the beginning of the year, with 233 more properties switching hands in April over March. That's a 19.6 percent increase since last month" explains OREB's President. "Average sale prices are on par with prices from a year ago, even year-to-date price comparisons remain steady."

Call today for real estate advice and information!



YOUR SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST

USE THESE DEEP-CLEANING TIPS SO THAT SO YOU DON'T MISS A SPOT!

Spring cleaning is a fair bit of work, but it's one of the most satisfying deep cleaning jobs you'll do. Do it right this year to get the season off to a fresh start!

The spring clean is an annual rite of passage for most homeowners. It's a chance to root out dirt in dark corners, clean up allergens and dust that have accumulated over the winter, and to freshen up musty carpets and upholstery.

Most of us commit to spring cleaning to get organized, too. According to a survey for The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA), the number one reason people spring clean homes is to remove clutter, followed closely by the desire to eliminate asthma and allergy triggers. "Take the time to map out your cleaning tasks," suggests Nancy Bock, SDA vice-president of education, in a press release. "Put a reminder on your calendar or smart phone, because having a schedule can help you clean more effectively and efficiently." Then, use these tips in each room to make your space sparkle.

STEP ONE: WASH BASEBOARDS AND TRIM

Start by dusting with a duster or cloth. Work out scuffs with a scrub brush and finish the job with a washcloth and liquid cleanser, diluted with three parts water. Dry with a paper towel or dry rag.

STEP TWO: CLEAN WALLS AND CEILINGS

Remove dust with a vacuum or a broom for hard to reach corners. Remove surface grime with a multi-surface cleaner. When you wash your walls, remember to start from the bottom and work your way up. Why? According to Shari MacDonald, president of the Prince Edward Island Home Economics Association in PEI, it's harder to wipe up drips on a dry wall.

STEP THREE: SCRUB WINDOWS AND SCREENS

Remove screens from windows and hose them down outside. Dry them gently. Vacuum the sills, and then wipe them down with a mixture of one part bleach and six parts water to remove any mildew and grime. Clean windows with a glass cleaner and paper towels. Tip: Wipe the interior side up and down, and exterior side left to right. That way, if there are any streaks, you'll know which side they're on. Return screens.

STEP FOUR: REFRESH CARPETS AND RUGS

Today's carpets are better than ever at resisting stains and soiling, but they still need to be deep cleaned every 12 to 18 months. Look into renting or investing in a carpet cleaner, which typically sprays a detergent and brushes while sopping up the dirty solution. For a quick freshen up, however, use a fabric deodorizing spray or sprinkle corn starch on the carpet, let it sit for one hour to absorb odours, and then vacuum away.

STEP FIVE: CLEAN THE FLOORS

Most floors, including linoleum and hardwood, can be cleaned with a damp mop and a diluted multipurpose cleaner (just make sure you dry the hardwood floor with a rag right away). For ceramic tile, try a rubbing alcohol solution (1/4 cup rubbing alcohol in two gallons of water). To get the grout clean as you go, carry a spray bottle with a slightly stronger alcohol-water solution.

STEP SIX: REFRESH UPHOLSTERED FURNISHINGS AND WINDOW TREATMENTS.

Start by removing cushions from furniture. Give the sofa a vacuum using the crevice attachment to reach into folds and corners. Gently beat cushions outside to remove dust and pet dander. Now is a good time to spot clean upholstery; use a teaspoon of clear liquid dish detergent in a cup of water. Remove window treatments and launder where appropriate. To eliminate odours on upholstery and window treatments, give them a spray with fabric deodorizer.

STEP SEVEN: DUST BOOKSHELVES AND FANS

We often dust everywhere but bookshelves and hard to reach places. When spring cleaning, take out all the books and dust them and the shelves with an extendable duster. Or, use a damp cloth to trap and lock dust and allergens. Don't forget the fan, which will only circulate dust if it's not clean when turned on after months of disuse.

STEP EIGHT: FRESHEN UP

Crack open the windows and let the fresh air in. On cooler days, sustain that just-cleaned smell with a scented candle or air freshener.

