

ENTAL MARKET

Ouébec

REPORT

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

www.cmhc.ca

Few housing units available in the Québec area

Highlights

- ✓ The rental housing vacancy rate fell to 0.8 per cent in 2001.
- A strong housing demand, buoyed up by a dynamic job market, and a low volume of rental construction are the reasons for this decrease
- Choice is waning in every sector and for units of all sizes.
- ✓ The increase in the average rent exceeded inflation.
- ✓ The vacancy rate will remain low in 2002.

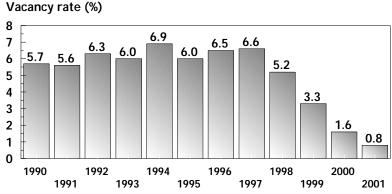
IN THIS

October 2001 Survey

Analysis

- 1 Few housing units available in the Québec area
- 2 Housing supply slow in adjusting
- 3 Market getting tighter everywhere
- 4 Rental increase exceeding inflation
- 4 Forecast: vacancy rate to remain low in 2002
- 5 Keep an eye on long-term trends
- 9 Methodology
- 9 Delimitation of Survey Zones
- 9 Statistical Tables

Vacancy Rate Falls Again in 2001



Source: CMHC



home to canadians Canadä For a fourth consecutive year, the rental housing vacancy rate decreased in 2001 in the Québec census metropolitan area (CMA). According to the latest annual rental market survey results published by CMHC, the vacancy rate on this market has now reached 0.8 per cent. This level represents a further decrease from the rate of 1.6 per cent registered the year before. In fact, it was the lowest vacancy level recorded in the Québec area since 1976. After varying between 5 per cent and 7 per cent during most of the 1990s, the vacancy rate embarked on a very sharp downward course in 1998.

The strong job creation that has been prevailing in the Québec area for the past few years, particularly in the youth employment segment, is one of the factors that most stimulated the rental housing demand. Thanks to the dynamic labour market conditions, many young people were able to leave their family home or the dwelling that they were sharing to move into their own apartment. The capital also continued to attract young people from other areas across Quebec. As well, the few rental structures built in recent years also contributed to the tighter conditions on the market.

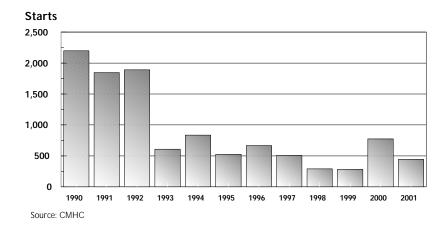
For all urban centres (10,000 or more inhabitants) across Quebec, the vacancy rate also decreased, reaching 1.3 per cent, compared to 2.2 per cent in 2000. The survey results indicate that the proportion of available units fell in all census metropolitan areas across Quebec. On the rental markets in Montréal (0.6 per cent), Hull (0.6 per cent) and Québec (0.8 per cent), the rates have now fallen below the 1-per-cent mark. In Sherbrooke, the vacancy rate went from 4.7 per cent in October 2000 down to 2.3 per cent in October 2001. The Trois-Rivières and Chicoutimi-Jonquière markets are not as tight. The rental unit surplus on the Trois-Rivières market (6.8 per cent in October 2000) was considerably reduced (4.7 per cent in October 2001) while, in Chicoutimi-Jonguière, the vacancy rate remained stable at 4.4 per cent.

Among the 26 CMAs across the country, Québec now posts the fourth lowest vacancy rate, along with Ottawa. Only Victoria (0.5 per cent), Montréal and Hull (both at 0.6 per cent) have smaller proportions of vacant units.

Housing supply slow in adjusting

Even with the shortage of available units, rental construction has remained very calm since the collapse of the real estate market in the early 1990s. In fact, since 1993, the annual volume of new dwellings has not exceeded 1,000 units. After rising to 772 units in 2000, rental starts fell back down to a total of just 441 units in 2001.

Rental Housing Starts Decline in 2001



Apartment Vac	ancy Rates	
Canada	2000	2001
Metropolitan Areas		
Calgary	1.3	1.2
Charlottetown Chicoutimi-Jonquière	2.6 4.4	1.8 4.4
Edmonton	1.4	0.9
Halifax	3.6	2.8
Hamilton	1.7	1.3
Hull	1.4	0.6
Kitchener London	0.7 2.2	0.9 1.6
Montréal	1.5	0.6
Oshawa	1.7	1.3
Ottawa	0.2	0.8
Québec	1.6	0.8
Regina Soint John	1.4	2.1 5.6
Saint John Saskatoon	3.4 1.7	2.9
Sherbrooke	4.7	2.3
St. Catharines-Niagara	2.6	1.9
St. John's	3.8	2.5
Sudbury	7.7	5.7
Thunder Bay Toronto	5.8 0.6	5.8 0.9
Trois-Rivières	6.8	4.7
Vancouver	1.4	1.0
Victoria	1.8	0.5
Windsor	1.9	2.9
Winnipeg	2.0	1.4
Total Canada	1.6	1.1
Québec Province Urban Areas from 50,000 to 99,999		
Drummondville	1.8	1.8
Granby	2.0	2.5
Shawinigan	8.4	7.7
St-Hyacinthe Sub-Total 50,000-99,999	1.8 3.1	1.3 2.6
Sub-10tal 50,000-99,999	J. I	2.0
Urban Areas from 10,000 to 49,999 Alma	1.8	4.4
Amos	10.5	14.2
Baie-Comeau	16.7	16.2
Cowansville	6.6	6.0
Dolbeau-Mistassini Gaspé	7.1 15.0	3.9 9.2
Joliette	4.2	2.2
La Tuque	10.6	13.0
Lachute	6.6	5.5
Magog	3.1	1.1
Matane Montmagny	14.4 1.5	11.4 1.3
Rimouski	6.5	3.9
Rivière-du-Loup	4.5	3.4
Roberval	5.3	4.1
Rouyn-Noranda	12.2	15.5
Salaberry-de-Valleyfield Sept-Îles	3.7	3.7 7.7
Sorel-Tracy	12.3 11.9	8.4
St-Georges	2.1	2.7
St-Jean-sur-Richelieu	2.8	1.2
Ste-Marie	1.7	2.8
Thetford-Mines	7.8	11.5
Val d'Or Victoriaville	11.4 2.3	11.4 2.0
Sub-Total 10,000-49,999	2.3 5.9	6.2
Total Province of Québec	2.2	1.3

Developers and lending institutions have therefore remained cautious and have hesitated to get involved in the construction of rental projects, deeming the financial risk too great or the profit margin too narrow. It should be mentioned that, due to the high vacancy rates during the 1990s, rents did not post any major increases, while construction costs continued to rise. This has led to a situation where the construction of standard quality rental dwellings is no longer cost-effective. To make such projects profitable, the units would have to be rented at prices well above those prevailing on the existing rental housing market.

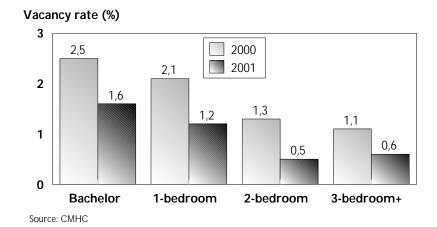
In such a context, developers are seeking projects offering more attractive profit margins. For this reason, construction is mainly limited to two market segments: retirement homes, which have garnered over half of all new rental units for the past few years, and luxury rental projects.

Certain developers are also looking toward the condominium construction sector, where the need for new units is picking up thanks to a very active resale market. In fact, the large surplus of condominium units melted away in recent years. After reaching a peak of 50 sellers per buyer in 1995, the condominium market returned to a balanced situation in 2001, with 10 sellers for every buyer. Since condominiums are easier to sell, developers can be assured of a faster return on their investment.

Market getting tighter everywhere

In almost every sector within the Québec area, the proportions of vacant units decreased over the past year. In fact, only the sector situated near the bridges on the south shore (zone 8) saw its rate remain stable at 0.3 per cent. The vacancy rates are now below 1 per cent in five of the nine survey zones. Market conditions are particularly tight in zones 3 (Duberger, Les Saules, Neufchatel, Lebourgneuf, Ancienne-

Larger Dwellings Harder to Find



Lorette) and 4 (Sainte-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, Saint-Augustin), where just 0.2 per cent of units are available. The highest vacancy rate was observed in the Beauport sector (1.5 per cent).

The vacancy rate decrease extended to units of all sizes. While all the rates were down, it can be seen this year again that dwellings with two or more bedrooms have the lowest vacancy rates. The versatility of larger units assures them better rental results. These apartments are sought not only by couples with or

without children, but also by people who want to get together to reduce their costs, as well as older people who are going back to renting and want more spacious units.

Regardless of the price range, it is more difficult this year to find a dwelling. However, as shown in the graph, the higher the range, the easier it is to rent the units. In fact, this is a trend that has been maintained for several years. This finding indicates that tenants seek a certain level of quality and that less

More Expensive Units Easier to Rent

Vacancy rates - two-bedroom units (%) 12 Under \$450 10 From \$450 to \$549 8 \$550 or 6 over 4 2 0 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 Source: CMHC

expensive dwellings, which are generally in poorer condition, are more difficult to rent. But, currently, the market is so tight that even less expensive units are quite easily finding takers.

Rental increase exceeding inflation

The tighter market conditions and the increase in energy costs in the winter of 2000 led to a more substantial rise in the average rent* in 2001. For the first time since the early 1990s, the increase for all units combined was greater than inflation. In fact, the average rent went up by 3.8 per cent, compared to an inflation rate of 2.7 per cent (calculated on an annual average from October to September).

It can be seen that larger units, which post the lowest vacancy rates, registered greater increases in their average rents. As such, dwellings with three or more bedrooms recorded the most considerable increase in their average rent (5.5 per cent), followed by two-bedroom units (3.9 per cent), bachelor apartments (3.3 per cent) and

one-bedroom units (3.1 per cent). It should be also mentioned that, in a context where available units are scarce, the offer of free months of rents, which was commonplace during the 1990s, has practically disappeared.

Forecast: vacancy rate to remain low in 2002

The vacancy rate will remain low over the coming months. Looking for a dwelling will therefore continue to be a difficult task. In fact, it is expected that barely 0.6 per cent of units will be available at the time of the next survey in October 2002. Despite the anticipated slower rise in the rental housing demand, due to a job market that will start to feel the negative effects of the economic slowdown, the new units that will arrive on the market will not be sufficient to raise the proportion of available units.

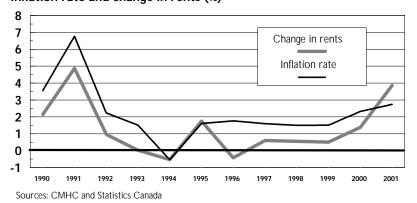
The supply is taking some time to adjust to the demand, as the development of a residential building construction project involves a great deal of preparation and investment funds. In addition, since the profit margin remains limited for more affordable housing, developers may well further concentrate their efforts on the construction of retirement homes and upscale rental housing, which offer better prospects in terms of profitability.

It is important to point out that our forecast does not take into account the housing units recently announced by the provincial government under the *Accès-Logis* program and the Affordable Housing Program resulting from a federal-provincial agreement. In fact, at the time of writing, the geographical distribution of these new units had not yet been specified. As soon as complete information becomes available, CMHC will adjust its forecasts.

In a context where housing units are scarce, it is to be expected that the average rent will rise at a pace slightly above inflation, which should hover around 2 per cent in 2002. Given the weaker pressure from energy costs, however, the increase will no doubt be lower than in 2001. As a result, the average rent should rise by about 3 per cent. ◆

Rental Increase Above Inflation in 2001

Inflation rate and change in rents (%)



* It should be noted that the average rents cannot provide an accurate measurement of the changes in apartment prices between two years, given that the results are based on a sample of buildings that can differ from one year to the next. The average rents reported in this publication rather give an indication of the amounts paid by unit size, geographical sector and included services (heating, electricity and hot water).

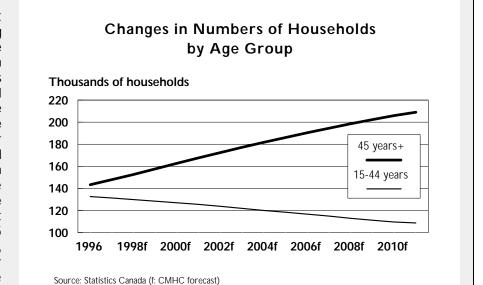
Keep an eye on long-term trends

Although it may be concluded from the conditions on the Québec area rental market that available housing units have grown scarcer over the past year, caution remains a must before starting up a new income-producing property. One should not lose sight of the fact that this is a long-term investment that will be influenced by movements in the demand resulting from both economic and demographic factors.

While it may be difficult to forecast economic conditions over a long period, demographic trends, on the other hand, are easier to predict. In fact, even if the rental market is currently very tight, with demand coming particularly from young people who are taking advantage of the favourable conditions on the labour market, we will be seeing a turnaround in the trends in the near future. With the aging of the population, the Québec area rental market will have to adjust to an increasingly older client group. The level of households aged 45 years or older will be on the rise, while the number of younger households will be posting negative growth. In such a context, there should be an increase in the demand

for higher quality rental dwellings (as people aged 45 years or older are generally better off financially) and also for retirement housing.

As well, a study conducted in 2001 by CMHC among people aged from 45 to 64 years revealed that one in four households in this age group are seriously thinking of moving within the next 5 to 10 years. Out of those who are currently homeowners and who intend to change their type of tenure, 43 per cent are considering the purchase of a condominium and 48 per cent are planning to rent a dwelling. These results therefore confirm the potential of upscale rental housing, as homeowners who will be turning to the rental market will have relatively significant financial means and they will be seeking comfort.



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METHODOLOGY

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation conducts the Rental Market Survey every year in October to determine the number of vacancies and the rents charged in rental structures. The survey is conducted on a sample basis in all urban areas with populations of 10,000 or more. Only structures that have been on the market for at least three months are included. While this publication is mainly about privately initiated apartment buildings with three or more units, the CMHC survey also examines row houses and publicly initiated rental and cooperative housing.

The survey is conducted by telephone or site visit, and information is obtained from the owner, manager or building superintendent. The survey is usually conducted in the first two weeks of October and these results reflect market conditions at that time.

Definitions

Vacancy: A unit is considered vacant if, at the time of the survey, it is physically unoccupied and available for immediate rental.

Rent: The rent data refers to the actual amount tenants pay for their unit. Amenities and services such as heat, light, parking, hot water and laundry facilities may or may not be included in the monthly rent reported in individual cases. The average rent figures reported in this publication represent the average of different units in the market area, some of which may have some or all of these services.

Rental apartment structure: Any building containing three or more rental dwellings that are not ground-oriented.

Acknowledgement

The Rental Market Survey could not have been conducted without the cooperation of the many property owners and managers throughout Canada. We greatly acknowledge their hard work and assistance in providing timely and accurate information. We sincerely hope that the results of this work will provide a benefit to these clients and to the entire housing industry.

Zones

Description of the Québec metropolitan area market zones:

- Zone 1: Basse-Ville de Québec, Vanier
- Zone 2: Haute-Ville de Québec
- Zone 3: Ancienne-Lorette, Neufchâtel, Duberger, Les Saules, Lebourgneuf
- **Zone 4:** Sainte-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, Saint-Augustin
- **Zone 5:** Val-Bélair, Saint-Émile, Loretteville, Lac Saint-Charles, Lac Delage, Valcartier, Shannon, Lac Saint-Joseph, Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier, Fossambault
- **Zone 6:** Grand Charlesbourg, Lac Beauport, Stoneham-Tewkesbury
- Zone 7: Grand Beauport, Sainte-Brigitte-de-Laval, Boischâtel, L'Ange-Gardien, Château-Richer, Île d'Orléans
- **Zone 8:** Charny, Saint-Romuald, Saint-Jean-Chrysostôme, Saint-Nicolas, Saint-Rédempteur, Breakeyville, Saint-Lambert, Saint-Étienne
- **Zone 9:** Lévis, Pintendre, Saint-Joseph-de-Lévy, Saint-Étienne-de-Beaumont

By Mark	nts Vacancy Ra et Zone and U c Metropolitan	nit Size
	Ono	Twe

Market Zone	Bachelor		One- Bedroom		Two- Bedroom		Three- Bedroom +		Total	
	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001
1- Québec Basse-Ville, Vanier	2.5	1.3	3.8	2.1	3.0	0.6	1.6	0.9	3.0	1.2
2- Québec Haute-Ville	3.9	1.5	1.4	1.3	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.3	1.5	1.1
3- Québec Des Rivières, L'AncLorette	2.4	0.5	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.6	0.2
4- Ste-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, St-August.	1.5	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.2
5- Val-Bélair, St-Émile, Loretteville, etc.	***	***	1.1	0.9	0.4	0.0	1.6	0.4	0.8	0.4
6- Charlesbourg, Stoneham, etc.	1.4	6.9	3.4	1.6	1.4	0.9	1.4	0.1	1.9	1.3
7- Beauport, Boischâtel, Î. O., etc.	4.5	1.3	2.3	1.3	3.1	1.2	3.3	3.3	2.9	1.5
8- Charny, St-Romuald, St-Jean-Ch., etc.	***	***	0.7	1.9	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
9- Lévis, Pintendre, etc.	***	***	2.8	1.0	0.6	0.6	2.8	0.9	1.4	0.7
Total - Québec Metropolitan	2.5	1.6	2.1	1.2	1.3	0.5	1.1	0.6	1.6	0.8

Apartments Average Rents (\$)
By Market Zone and Unit Size
Québec Metropolitan Area

Market Zone	Bachelor		One- Bedroom		Two- Bedroom		Three- Bedroom +	
	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001
1- Québec Basse-Ville, Vanier	312	312	372	384	459	467	529	545
2- Québec Haute-Ville	438	457	638	620	675	760	719	794
3- Québec Des Rivières, L'AncLorette	326	342	423	431	520	533	570	581
4- Ste-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, St-August.	371	389	468	506	581	608	633	670
5- Val-Bélair, St-Émile, Loretteville, etc.	***	***	386	398	490	494	563	555
6- Charlesbourg, Stoneham, etc.	343	348	433	451	537	553	597	607
7- Beauport, Boischâtel, Î. O., etc.	324	330	371	381	447	459	513	508
8- Charny, St-Romuald, St-Jean-Ch., etc.	***	***	403	401	479	506	551	664
9- Lévis, Pintendre, etc.	***	***	374	388	472	483	519	567
Total - Québec Metropolitan	368	380	459	473	518	538	599	632

Number of Apartments - Vacant and Universe (Units) By Market Zone and Unit Size Québec Metropolitan Area

Market Zone	Bachelor		One- Bedroom		Two- Bedroom		Three- Bedroom +		Total	
	Vacant	Univ.	Vacant	Univ.	Vacant	Univ.	Vacant	Univ.	Vacant	Univ.
1- Québec Basse-Ville, Vanier	19	1,476	107	5,002	49	7,796	19	2,044	194	16,318
2- Québec Haute-Ville	21	1,403	51	3,981	31	2,372	5	1,889	108	9,642
3- Québec Des Rivières, L'AncLorette	2	385	6	1,607	7	4,561	0	778	16	7,330
4- Ste-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, St-August.	12	1,726	8	5,277	6	6,777	5	2,187	30	15,966
5- Val-Bélair, St-Émile, Loretteville, etc.	***	72	5	578	0	1,321	2	477	9	2,448
6- Charlesbourg, Stoneham, etc.	36	520	39	2,354	40	4,649	2	1,347	116	8,869
7- Beauport, Boischâtel, Î. O., etc.	3	243	18	1,377	37	3,020	22	655	81	5,295
8- Charny, St-Romuald, St-Jean-Ch., etc.	***	66	11	593	1	3,066	0	481	14	4,206
9- Lévis, Pintendre, etc.	***	333	9	874	12	2,219	6	655	30	4,081
Total - Québec Metropolitan	100	6,224	254	21,642	184	35,779	60	10,509	598	74,154

Apartment Average Rents (\$) - With and Without Services * By Market Zone and Unit Size Québec Metropolitan Area

Market Zone	Bachelor		_	ne- room		vo- room	Three- Bedroom +	
	With Services	Without Services	With Services	Without Services	With Services	Without Services	With Services	Without Services
1- Québec Basse-Ville, Vanier	321	277	402	370	498	459	607	492
2- Québec Haute-Ville	511	277	743	438	1,025	590	1,106	704
3- Québec Des Rivières, L'AncLorette	349	350	421	472	515	549	572	612
4- Ste-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, St-August.	389	399	513	537	630	602	715	601
5- Val-Bélair, St-Émile, Loretteville, etc.	***	***	426	375	511	495	588	565
6- Charlesbourg, Stoneham, etc.	358	320	460	485	595	535	651	582
7- Beauport, Boischâtel, Î. O., etc.	322	250	393	342	475	439	516	478
8- Charny, St-Romuald, St-Jean-Ch., etc.	***	***	414	412	514	510	581	549
9- Lévis, Pintendre, etc.	***	***	401	392	512	475	622	549
Total - Québec Metropolitan	401	294	518	416	601	515	699	587

Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) By Market Zone and Structure Size Québec Metropolitan Area

Market Zone	3 to 5 Units		6 to 19 Units		20 to 49 Units		50 to 99 Units		100 Units +	
	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001
1- Québec Basse-Ville, Vanier	***	***	3.5	0.6	1.5	0.6	1.3	1.3	3.2	1.9
2- Québec Haute-Ville	***	***	2.0	1.1	1.3	1.5	0.4	0.1	1.8	1.4
3- Québec Des Rivières, L'AncLorette	***	***	0.3	0.2	1.3	0.0	1.8	1.6	***	***
4- Ste-Foy, Sillery, Cap-Rouge, St-August.	***	***	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.0	1.1	0.4	0.7	0.5
5- Val-Bélair, St-Émile, Loretteville, etc.	***	***	***	***	1.9	0.0	***	***	***	***
6- Charlesbourg, Stoneham, etc.	***	***	2.5	0.7	2.0	1.3	0.7	2.3	1.4	3.4
7- Beauport, Boischâtel, Î. O., etc.	***	***	***	***	3.7	1.7	0.4	0.0	***	***
8- Charny, St-Romuald, St-Jean-Ch., etc.	***	0.5	***	0.0	1.3	1.4	***	***	***	***
9- Lévis, Pintendre, etc.	***	0.6	0.9	0.7	1.3	0.3	***	***	***	1.9
Total - Québec Metropolitan	2.0	1.3	1.9	0.6	1.3	0.6	1.0	8.0	1.4	1.3

Apartment Vacancy Rates (%) and Average Rents (\$) in 2001 By Year of Construction and Unit Size Québec Metropolitan Area

Year of Construction	Bachelor		One- Bedroom		Two- Bedroom		Three- Bedroom +		Total	
	V. R.	Rent	V. R.	Rent	V. R.	Rent	V. R.	Rent	V. R.	Rent
1990 or later	5.8	403	1.3	518	0.4	591	0.1	651	1.1	585
1980 to 1989	0.7	319	0.3	485	0.2	545	0.0	631	0.2	543
1970 to 1979	1.0	412	0.9	507	0.3	561	0.7	666	0.6	540
Before 1970	0.6	353	1.7	426	1.0	487	0.7	609	1.1	481

^{***} Sample too small to disclose results

^{*} With services includes: heating, electricity and hot water