## NORTHERN HOUSING REPORT



Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Date Released: 2009

### **Whitehorse**

#### **Economy**

Strong mining activity in 2008 capped off the fifth consecutive year of economic expansion in the Yukon. While the territory will not be insulated from global economic conditions this year, economic outlook is still expected to remain positive. Support will come from increased government

expenditures as the territory outlined its first billion dollar budget for 2009-2010. However, prospects for growth may be dampened by the slower pace of mining activity as a result of lower commodity prices outlook, as well more cautious consumer spending due to economic uncertainty.

An average of nearly 700 positions were created in 2008, the second straight year of job growth for the territory. Employment growth has

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- Pace of residential construction activity expected to be slower this year.
- Vacancy rates will remain low and average two-bedroom rent will see a modest increase.
- Number of real estate transactions and price growth will moderate.

#### 2 Yellowknife

- A weakened resource sector slows economic growth.
- Increased multiple unit activity should boost housing starts.
- Existing housing sales slip below 400 units for the first time since 2000, prices moderate slightly.
- Rental market vacancies remain low, rents continue to rise.

#### 3 Iqaluit

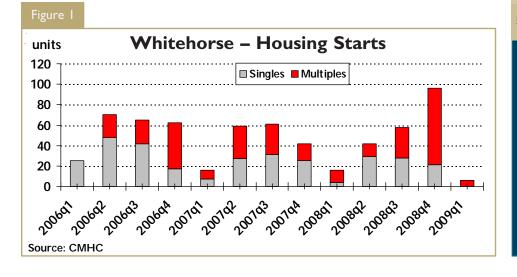
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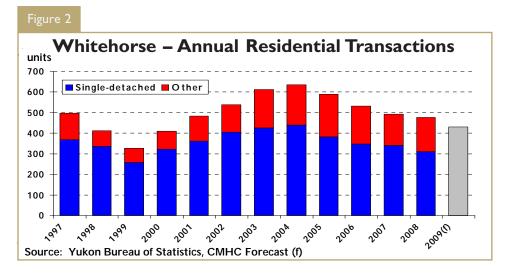
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moderated from 2008 levels in the first three months of 2009, while the unemployment rate has been on the rise but remained below the national average. Average weekly earnings are still increasing due to wage growth in the service and trade sectors. As the public sector is a major employer in Yukon, accounting for approximately 40 per cent of total employed, Whitehorse will not experience significant fluctuations in employment this year.

Statistics Canada's survey of Private and Public Investment Intentions indicates that private and public investment intentions will be lower in 2009 compared to 2008. The majority of the decrease will be attributed to lower planned capital spending. Investment in housing will be one of the few areas expected to increase this year.

#### **New Home Market**

Total housing starts in Whitehorse increased to 212 units in 2008 from 178 units in 2007. Multi-family starts, which include semi-detached, row,

and apartment units rose to 130 units at the end of last year. Housing starts were most pronounced in the row type where 63 units were started. Single-detached starts declined from 90 units in 2007 to 82 units in 2008.

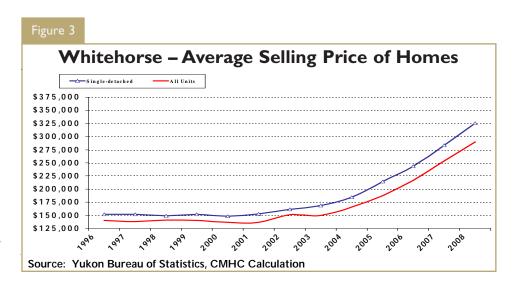
Multi-family construction took the majority share of total housing starts in 2008 driven by demand from first-time buyers and empty nesters. Over 100 of the units started last year were still under construction as of the end of the first quarter of 2009. The pace at which these units

will be absorbed will affect the number of multi-family units started in 2009. This year, total multi-family starts are expected to reach 100 units.

Single-detached homes will continue to be in demand in the forecast period but will be constrained by the availability of lots in the city. While lot sales arising from development projects under way are expected over the next two years, construction activity will be affected by the timing of release of these lots. Lots sales conducted towards the end of the year may push the majority of the building activity into next year. Single-detached starts are forecast to come in at 55 units in 2009.

#### **Real Estate Transactions**

According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics quarterly Real Estate Survey, residential real estate transactions in Whitehorse excluding those entered into at 'not-at-arm's-length' declined to 476 units in 2008 from 499 units in 2007. The share of



transactions recorded by MLS® remained flat relative to 2007 at 61 per cent of the total. Average price for all types of housing in 2008 rose to \$290,288, up 14 per cent from the previous year. The price of single-family homes gained 15 per cent during the year to settle just above \$325,000.

Total MLS® sales in the first quarter of 2009 were down one-third compared to a year ago. While active listings remain elevated above historical averages, prices in the first three months of this year have recorded consecutive year-over-year decreases. As buyers are more cautious in making large purchases and are afforded with more choice arising from the number of available listings on the market, the number of residential real estate transactions is expected to total 430 units in 2009. The average price for housing of all

types will increase this year by 6.7 per cent to \$309,799.

#### **Rental Market**

According to Statistics Canada, the total number of rental dwellings in the Whitehorse CA increased from 2,720 in the 1996 census to 2,915 in the 2006 census, compared to a decrease of 26,645 dwellings across Canada during the same time period. These dwellings include units in the purpose-built rental apartment market and the secondary rental market including single-detached, multi-family and other accessory suites.

A recent survey conducted by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics reported that overall rental apartment vacancy rate in Whitehorse for buildings of four-or-more units was 2.1 per cent in March 2009, translating into 18

vacant units out of 839 units in the apartment rental universe. Vacancy rates have remained low, as there have not been significant additions to the stock of purpose-built rental units. As major projects are not expected this year, CMHC expects a vacancy rate of two per cent by December 2009.

The average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Whitehorse increased to \$802 in March 2009. The pace of rental rate increases has been consistently modest for several years and 2008 was no exception. The two-bedroom rental rate increased to \$787 in December 2008 from \$748 in 2007. As demand for rental units is not expected to increase significantly, CMHC forecasts average two-bedroom rental rate will reach \$825 by December 2009.

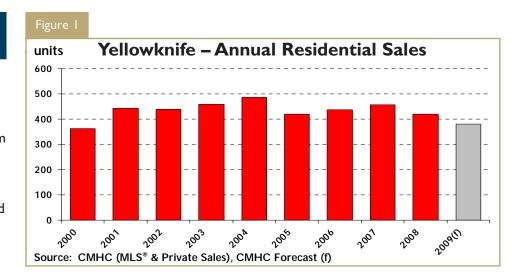
NATI 1							
Whitehorse Forecast Summary May 2009							
				%		%	
	2006	2007	2008	Change	2009(F)	% Chg	
New Home Market							
Total Starts (units)	222	178	212	19.1%	155	-26.9%	
Single-Detached Starts	132	90	82	-8.9%	55	-32.9%	
Multi-Family Starts	90	88	130	47.7%	100	-23.1%	
Real Estate Transactions*							
Residential sales	537	499	476	-4.6%	430	-9.7%	
Average price (\$)	219,812	256,939	290,288	13.0%	309,799	6.7%	
Rental Market(Q4 Data)**							
Apartment Vacancy Rate (%)	2.1%	2.8%	2.4%		2.0%		
Average Two-Bedroom Apartment Rent (\$)	741	748	787		825		
*MLS®+Private(source: YBS, CMHC Forecast)							
* source: YBS, CMHC Forecast							

## Yellowknife

#### **Economy**

The strong demand for diamonds that fuelled the NWT's mining boom in the late 1990s has been reduced by the global economic downturn. The diamond mines in NWT and nearby in Nunavut have experienced job losses, production cuts and reduced capital expenditures as producers cope with the drop in the value and sales of diamonds on the world market. Meanwhile, the Mackenzie Valley pipeline remains at the regulatory review stage and the \$16.4 billion price tag makes the project an uncertain bet in today's global credit environment. Weakened prices for natural resources have reduced NWT's mineral exploration in 2009 and oil and gas extraction is also expected to perform below the record levels of activity reported in 2007.

Population growth in the territory was undercut in 2008 by large decreases in net migration as employment fell by 2.8 per cent on an annual basis compared with 2007. With the resource sector expected to remain weak this year, the outlook for Yellowknife calls for a continuation of the slow growth environment witnessed in 2008. While infrastructure spending will provide some level of support for the local economy, the general downturn in the mining industry will prevent any resurgence in housing demand this year.



#### **Resale Home Market**

Following two years of improving activity in 2006 and 2007, existing home sales in Yellowknife fell by eight per cent last year to 419 units and further reductions are anticipated in 2009. The slowdown in sales in 2008 came about despite continued improvement in supply. Resale home listings, both MLS and private, rose by 2.6 per cent last year to the highest level in four years. With little new housing under construction this winter, demand for existing units should benefit from the lack of new supply. However, reduced sales activity reported during the first quarter points to another slow year ahead. Slower economic growth will lower demand in 2009, with unit sales falling by another 9.3 per cent to 380 units, representing the lowest level since 2000.

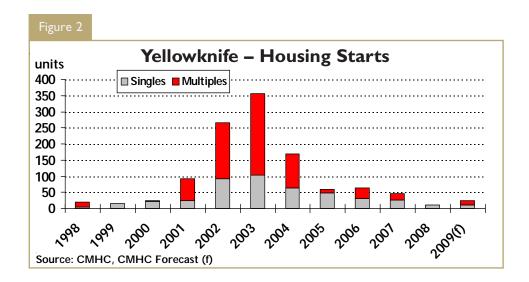
Despite a reduction in demand in 2008, residential resale prices rose by 4.6 per cent in 2008 to \$318,000. This came on the heels of an 11.6 per cent gain in average price reported in 2007. Part of this

increase was compositional shift in the sales mix. Moderately-priced units selling for under \$200,000 accounted for 18 per cent of sales on average in 2007 but fell to under 12 per cent last year. Similarly, units selling for over \$400,000 increased from 18 per cent of the market, on average, in 2007 to an average of 22.5 per cent in 2008. Sustained buyers' market conditions will contain price growth pressures in 2009, with a typical home selling for \$315,000, representing a decline of just below one per cent from 2008.

#### **New Home Market**

On the heels of a 27 per cent decrease in 2007, total housing starts in Yellowknife declined to only 12 units last year, representing the lowest level of new housing activity since 1998. An upturn in multifamily construction this year should provide some improvements but total volumes will remain well below longer-term averages.

Single-detached starts in 2008 declined to only 10 units in



Yellowknife, representing the weakest performance since 1998. This followed a 13 per cent decrease in 2007, when single starts amounted to 27 units. With adequate supplies available in the existing home market, increases in single-detached starts are not expected this year. We look for activity to remain similar to the volumes witnessed in 2008 and well below the 44 units started on average between 1999 and 2008.

There were only two multiple dwelling starts in Yellowknife during 2008, compared with 20 in 2007 and 33 in 2006. Last year's performance represented the slowest year since 1998-99 when no multiples were started due to the uncertainty associated with the dividing of the territory and the creation of Nunavut. Tight rental market conditions should offer some opportunity to developers. However, a stalled 16 unit townhouse project in the Niven Lake subdivision presents a wild card to this outlook. Despite the uncertainty, we look for multiple starts, including semidetached, row and apartment units, to reach near 15 units this year.

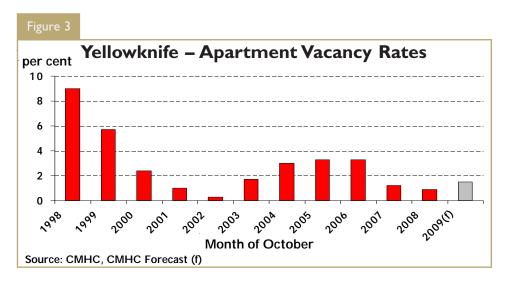
#### **Rental Market**

With little in the way of rental construction occurring last year, the apartment vacancy rate fell from 1.2 per cent in October 2007 to 0.9 per cent in October 2008. Considering the recent levels of outmigration and employment losses across the NWT, we anticipate some upward movement in Yellowknife's vacancies this fall despite the lack of new

supply. However, overall vacancy rates should remain below the two per cent level this October.

For a fixed sample of structures, average two-bedroom apartment rents increased on average by \$47 per month between October 2007 and October 2008 to \$1,411.

Continued relatively tight conditions will keep upward pressure on rents this year. CMHC's expects rents for units common to both surveys to increase in 2009 by close to \$39 per month for two-bedroom units to an average of \$1,450.



Yellowknife Forecast Summary May 2009									
% %									
	2006	2007	2008	Change	2009(F)	% Chg			
New Home Market									
Total Starts (units)	64	47	12	-74.5%	25	108.3%			
Single-Detached Starts	31	27	10	-63.0%	10	0.0%			
Multi-Family Starts	33	20	2	-90.0%	15	650.0%			
Resale Market*									
Residential sales	437	456	419	-8.1%	380	-9.3%			
Res. resale price (\$)	272,300	304,000	318,000	4.6%	315,000	-0.9%			
Rental Market (OCP Data)**									
Apartment Vacancy Rate (%)	3.3%	1.2%	0.9%		1.5%				
Average Two-Bedroom Apartment Rent (\$)	1,365	1,364	1,411		1,450				
*MLS®+Private(source CMHC Forecast)	*MLS®+Private(source CMHC Forecast)								
** source: CMHC, CMHC Forecast									

## **I**qaluit

# Iqaluit Housing Market - Review

Igaluit is the capital of Nunavut and the largest community. The city's economy is largely based in government administration. Although this continues to be the primary source of growth and development, other sectors are also growing. In 2008, construction of many institutional projects took place such as the start of a school expansion, new hospital, a new RCMP administration building and other municipal infrastructure projects. Residential production also influenced the construction landscape. New buildings were

added to the rental universe in 2008 and we anticipate additional completions in 2009 that will increase the supply of units offered for rent. Furthermore, the city opened up the new phase of the Plateau Subdivision for development. Construction has begun on a majority of the single-detached lots, while some multi-family projects are underway.

#### **Resale Home Market**

The Iqaluit Housing Market is unique compared with most markets across Canada. Like many Nunavut communities, the majority of land, or lots, in Iqaluit is owned either by the municipality or by the Inuit. Most

other lots are titled to the Municipal Corporation which issues Leasehold Titles for use. When the title of the lease is transferred, a price (either the cost of development or some consideration) is also given. In 2008, 78 transfers of residential real estate occurred in Igaluit compared to 50 in 2007. Of the 78 transfers, or residential sales, 26 declared a nominal sale value of between \$1 and \$10, while 52 declared a sale value of between \$195,000 and \$475,000. The resulting average price of residential sales valued over \$195,000 was \$348,544, an increase of nearly four per cent from 2007. The median price in 2008 was \$355,000 compared to \$348,500 in 2007.

<u>Iqaluit Residential Sales</u>									
<u>2006</u> <u>2007</u> <u>2008</u>									
Residential Sales 59 50 78									
Average Price	\$271,895	\$335,259	\$348,544						
Median Price	\$255,000	\$348,500	\$355,000						
Avg. Price Sq. foot	\$196.00	\$219.23	\$231.76						
Source: CMHC									

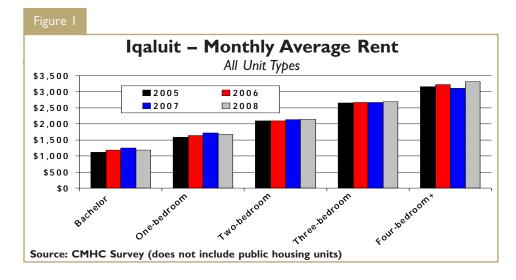
Iqaluit continues to grow. The opening of the new phase of the Plateau Subdivision has expanded opportunities for development. In 2008, over \$12.5 million dollars in residential development permits were issued, more than doubling the amount in 2007 of \$5.9 million dollars. Permits were issued for 18 single-detached and 32 multi-family units in 2008.

#### **Rental Market**

In 2008, the CMHC survey revealed the rental universe increased from 1,650 units in 2007 to 1,731 units this year. The increase in the rental universe was due to completion of newly construction units. Of the 1,731 units, 420 were social housing (public) units, which although identified were not included in any average rent calculations. The vacancy rate in Iqaluit's non-social housing units declined from 1.5 per cent in 2007 to 0.8 per cent in 2008. Of the 1,311 non-social housing units, eleven were found vacant at the time of the survey in 2008.

Like other CMHC rental surveys, suites with three-or-more bedrooms

Rental Universe			
	<u>Units</u>	<u>%</u>	
Bachelors	62	3.6	
One Bedroom	414	23.9	
Two Bedroom	464	26.8	
Three Bedroom	371	21.4	
Four Bedroom	2	0.1	
Four Bedroom +	23	1.3	
No BR Identified (Social)	<u>395</u>	22.8	
Total	1,731		
Source: CMHC			



in Iqaluit available for long-term

have been rolled up. This makes particular sense in Iqaluit since the universe size of units with four bedrooms or more is quite small. The survey revealed a decrease in average rents for bachelor and one-bedroom units from 2007 levels. In comparison to 2006, however, the average rent for one-bedroom suites increased, while the average rent for bachelor units remained fairly stable. Meanwhile, two- and three-bedroom plus suites witnessed a small rental increase in 2008 compared to the previous year.

Across all bedroom types, the average rent declined from \$2,151 in 2007 to \$2,136 in 2008, a decrease

of 0.7 per cent. This marginal decrease is likely the result of the Government of Nunavut (GN), the largest leaseholder, ceasing rental rate increases to their employees in early 2008. Previously, the GN was to implement a policy to raise staff housing rents to market level by January 1, 2010. However, the policy likely impacted the government's ability to recruit and retain staff. Therefore, rental rates were rolled back to 2007 levels.

rental and the current market rent on those units. The survey was conducted over a six-week period, from mid-November to year-end 2008. Our survey depends on the input of developers, building owners, two senior levels of government (Territorial and Federal) and their respective housing officials. CMHC acknowledges their hard work and assistance in providing timely and accurate information.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of the survey was to identify residential accommodation

Average Monthly Rent - by bedroom type (excluding social housing)									
2008 2007 % Change Bachelors \$1.184 \$1.254 -5.6%									
One-bedroom	\$1,184 \$1,677	\$1,254 \$1,715	-5.6% -2.2%						
Two-bedroom	\$2,150	\$2,135	0.7%						
Three-bedroom	\$2,697	\$2,668	1.1%						
Three-bedroom+	\$2,737	\$2,701	1.3%						
Four-bedroom \$3,045 \$3,538 -13.9%									
Four-bedroom+	Four-bedroom+ \$3,348 \$2,953 13.4%								
Source: CMHC									

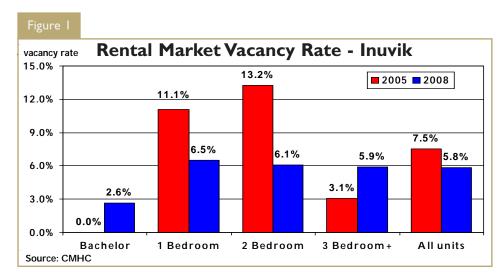
## **Inuvik**

## Inuvik Housing Market - Review

#### **Economic Overview**

Inuvik's economic base is underpinned by industries such as public administration, natural gas, transportation, tourism and furs. Located on the Mackenzie River delta near the Arctic Ocean, Inuvik is a government center and transportation hub for the North-Western Arctic. With a population of 3,420 people in 2007, Inuvik is the third largest community in the NWT. In 2002, the Ikhil gas project, which was the first natural gas development project north of the Arctic Circle, provided the town with access to gas for electrical generation and heating.

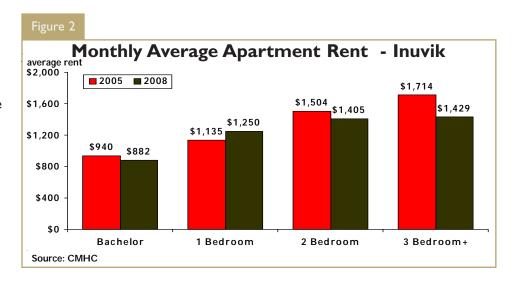
Different housing investments have been made since 2002. Investors look forward to being able to capitalize on the potential economic spin offs of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline (MVPL), a proposed 1,220kilometre natural gas pipeline system along the Mackenzie Valley that will connect northern onshore gas fields with North American markets. The area has important gas reserves but access to southern markets must materialize before seeing any increase in activity. Locals expect such increased development associated with the MVPL will help lower the current unemployment rate of 11.2 per cent. Possible labor shortages may still arise along the process as Inuvik's participation rate is already at close to 80 per cent.



#### **Rental Market**

Between the summers of 2005 and 2008, Inuvik's rental market universe increased from 371 to 377 units. Nearly two-thirds of the universe is comprised of apartments. Fewer rental rows remained vacant compared with apartments in 2008. As a result, the vacancy rate for rental rows was at 4.4 per cent in the summer of 2008, compared with an apartment vacancy rate of 6.7 per

cent. The combined average vacancy rate for rows and apartments was at 5.8 per cent in 2008. CMHC's review in July 2008 found strong consumer preferences for one- and two-bedroom units, as vacancies dropped for these in all housing types. The average monthly two-bedroom apartment rent in Inuvik was \$1,405 in 2008, about \$99 lower than 2005. For three-bedroom apartments, renters on average paid \$1,429 a month in



2008, \$285 less than in 2005. The average monthly rent for one bedroom units was reported at \$1,250 in 2008, about \$115 higher than in 2005. The average monthly rent for bachelor units decreased by \$58 from 2005 to reach \$882 in 2008.

#### Resale Market

Twenty-seven existing homes were sold in Inuvik during 2007 compared with 34 one year earlier. Activity declined further in the first half of 2008 with seven transactions on the resale market, compared with 10 sales in 2007 at this time. Someone

buying a resale home in Inuvik during 2007 paid \$246,000 on average, \$30,600 more than one year earlier. The average resale price declined to \$229,286 during the first half of 2008, from \$240,170 one year earlier. Changes in the average sale price must be viewed with caution due to the limited number of sales in this market during any given year.

Inuvik Residential Sales									
<u>2003</u> <u>2004</u> <u>2005</u> <u>2006</u> <u>2007</u>									
Residential Sales	30	43	36	34	27				
Residential Sale Price	\$185,500	\$216,400	\$212,850	\$215,400	\$246,000				
Source: CMHC	Source: CMHC								

## **Hay River**

# Hay River Housing Market - Review

#### **Economic Overview**

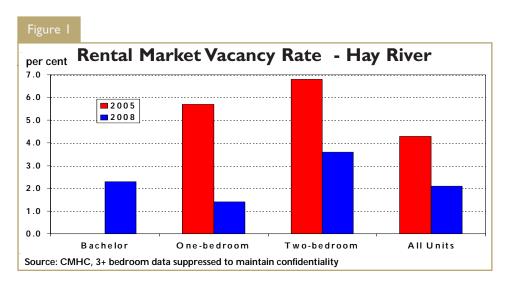
Hay River's economy is dominated by the private sector, with transportation companies providing a major source of employment in the area. Other major employers include government, tourism and the commercial fishing industry. In 2008, the population of the town increased by 0.8 per cent year-over-year to 3,680 people. Because of its location at the mouth of the Hay River on Great Slave Lake, the community acts as base for most of the Great Slave fishery and as the major transportation hub for the re-supply of NWT communities. In 2006, Hay River's participation rate was at 79 per cent while its unemployment

rate of 6.4 per cent was lower than the territorial average. Work continues on Tamerlane Ventures Incorporated's Pine Point property, 42 kilometers east of Hay River, a pilot project involving a one million ton bulk sample from the previously closed Pine Point Mine. A Type "A" land use permit, issued in July 2008,

allowed the commencement of initial construction. A positive impact is expected on Hay River for goods, services, entertainment and housing.

#### Rental Market

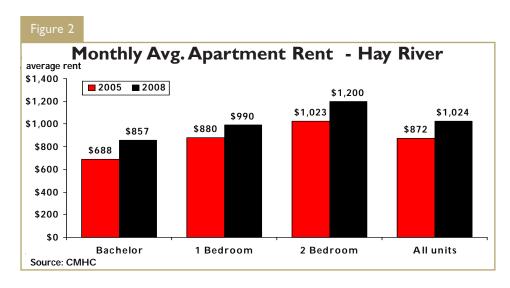
Hay River's rental market universe gained five units between 2005 and



2008. Of a total rental stock of 189 units in August 2008, four were vacant. This translated into a vacancy rate of 2.1 per cent compared with 4.3 per cent three years earlier. The drop in the overall vacancy rate was mainly due to lower vacancies within one- and two-bedroom units, which comprise over two-thirds of the rental stock. The most popular rentals in 2008 were one-bedrooms with the lowest vacancy rate of 1.4 per cent. Two-bedroom rentals had vacancies of 3.6 per cent with bachelors at 2.3 per cent. In Hay River, on average, all bedroom types rented for \$1,024 a month in August 2008, \$152 higher than the average rent of \$872 seen in 2005. The average monthly rent for a two bedroom unit increased by \$177 from the summer of 2005 to reach \$1200 in 2008.

#### Resale Market

CMHC's review in July 2008 found a good supply of housing on the market and steady purchase activity. Most of the sales identified were



private as opposed to transactions involving Realtors®. There were about 18 properties listed for sale in July 2008 ranging in a list price of \$35,000 to \$485,000. In 2007, 79 resale homes were sold, compared with 73 a year earlier. Residential sales declined slightly during the first half of 2008. To the end of June 2008, 25 resale homes were sold compared with 35 in 2007 at this time of the year. In 2007, an average resale home, which would sell for \$187,400, was 22 per cent more

expensive than in 2006. To the end of June 2008, someone who would buy a resale home in Hay River would pay \$210,736 on average, 8.7 per cent more than the average paid by buyers who closed deals a year prior at this time. Part of this increase can be attributed to some newer housing coming on the market. A subsequent visit to the community in April 2009 found the resale market well supplied with listings.

Ī	Hay River Residential Sales								
	<u>2003</u> <u>2004</u> <u>2005</u> <u>2006</u> <u>2007</u>								
ı	Residential Sales	86	74	68	73	79			
ı	Residential Sale Price	\$120,250	\$125,150	\$172,000	\$153,400	\$187,400			
l	Source: CMHC								

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