

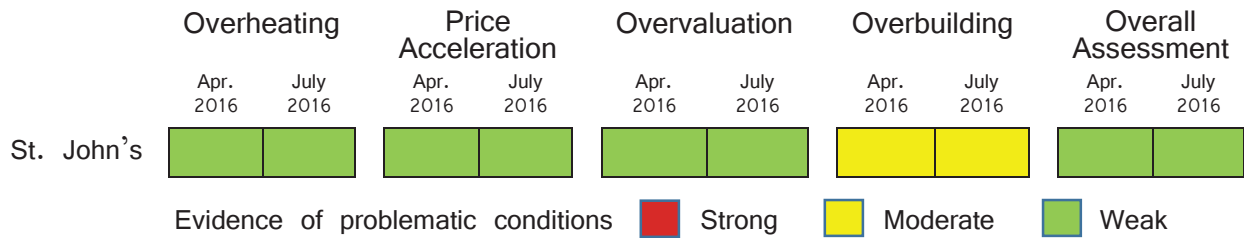
HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT St. John's CMA

Date Released: Third Quarter 2016



Housing market intelligence you can count on

Highlights



- Overall, we detect weak evidence of problematic conditions in the St. John's CMA.¹
- House prices overall continue to decline.
- We detect moderate evidence of overbuilding due to a relatively high inventory of completed and unsold units. However, inventory has showed a small decline over the three previous quarters and is back to the threshold.
- Excess supply of existing home inventory and declining sales activity has mitigated any evidence of overheating and price acceleration.
- The HMA analytical framework considers four factors to assess the evidence of problematic housing market conditions: overheating; acceleration in the growth of house prices; overvaluation; and, overbuilding. A brief summary of the framework is presented on page 5 of this report.

HMA Overview²

As Canada's authority on housing, CMHC contributes to market stability by providing information on potential imbalances that could affect housing markets. With the Housing Market Assessment (HMA), CMHC offers information and analysis that can help Canadians make more informed decisions.

The HMA combines the results from a technical framework with insights gained through CMHC's Market Analysts' knowledge of local market conditions. These insights position CMHC to provide additional context and interpretation to the results of the HMA framework.

The HMA framework detects problematic market conditions in local housing markets by identifying imbalances. An example would be the detection of overbuilding, a situation in which the inventory of unsold new homes accumulates due to supply outpacing demand. Such an imbalance could be resolved by an adjustment in house prices. As an example, lower prices would help resolving an excess supply imbalance by supporting stronger demand and/or reducing supply. However, other unexpected development that do not originate from the housing market could accentuate or reduce an imbalance.

Colour codes indicate the level of evidence of problematic conditions.

The HMA is a comprehensive framework that considers the intensity of signals of imbalances (that is, how far the indicator is from its historical average), and the persistence over time. Generally, low intensity and persistence are associated with potential weaker evidence of problematic conditions. As the number of intense and persistent signals increases, the associated evidence of problematic conditions becomes stronger.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Access CMHC's Market Analysis Centre publications quickly and conveniently on the Order Desk at www.cmhc.ca/housingmarketinformation. View, print, download or subscribe to get market information e-mailed to you on the day it is released. CMHC's electronic suite of national standardized products is available for free.

¹ Results are based on data as of the end of March 2016 and local market intelligence up to end of June 2016. CMHC continuously monitors market developments and will issue HMA updates on a quarterly basis.

² A detailed description of the framework is available in the appendix of the [National edition](#).

In detail

Overheating

We detect little evidence of overheating in the St. John's housing market. A decline in economic growth and related uncertainty as well as retirees downsizing and a preference for newly built custom homes by both first-time and move-up buyers, has resulted in an excess in the supply of homes for sale. With a variety of housing options and prices throughout the St. John's area, homebuyers are able to take their time making a purchase decision in the current buyers' market. Also, economic weakness has led to a retraction in sales activity in 2016.

Price Acceleration

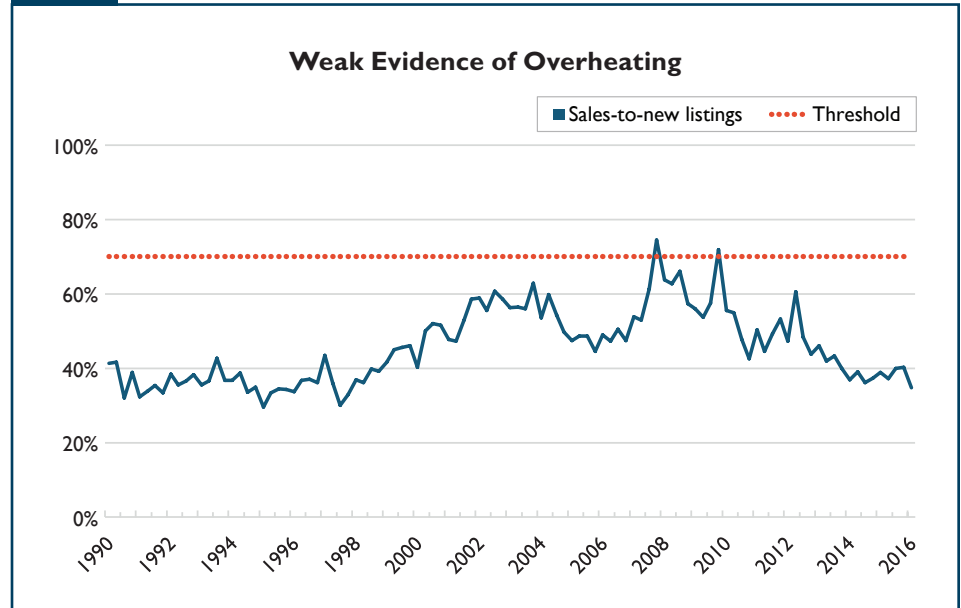
An increase in the supply of homes for sale has outpaced the increase in demand since 2012, keeping the

"House prices overall continue to decline in the St. John's area housing market and there is moderate evidence of overbuilding. A decline in economic growth has led to a slowdown in housing market activity this year and our overall assessment of weak evidence of problematic conditions."



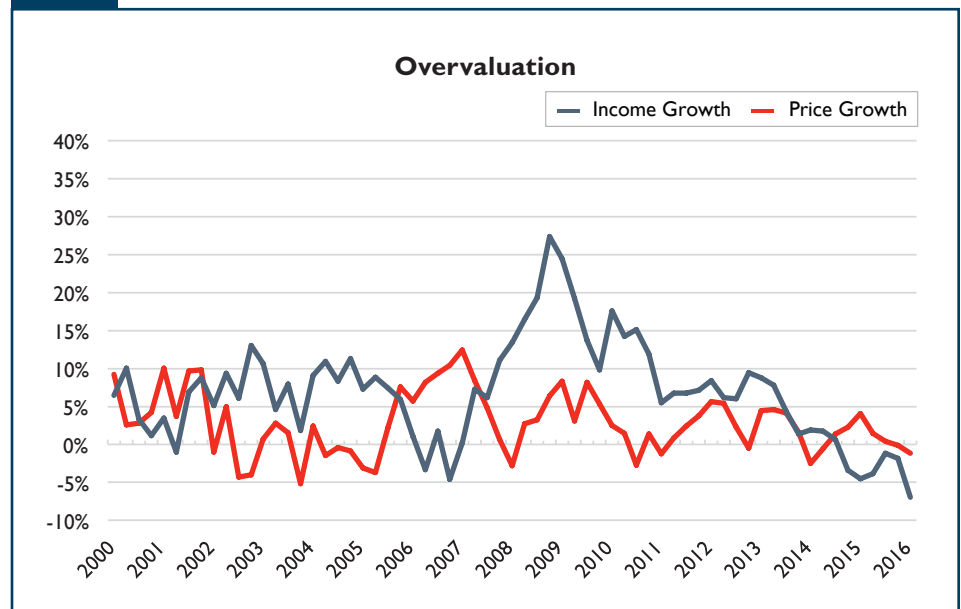
Chris Janes
Senior Market Analyst (St. John's)

Figure 1



Sources: CREA and calculations (threshold) by CMHC. Last data point: 2016 Q1.

Figure 2



Sources: Statistics Canada and CMHC. Last data point: 2016 Q1.

growth in average prices muted over the past few years. A lack of economic growth and uncertainty has led to continued downward price pressure this year. This supports weak evidence of problematic price acceleration in the St. John's resale market. Large areas of developed and undeveloped land, combined with strong transportation infrastructure,

will provide relief on upward price pressures as home builders are able to react quickly to any increases in housing demand if required

Overvaluation

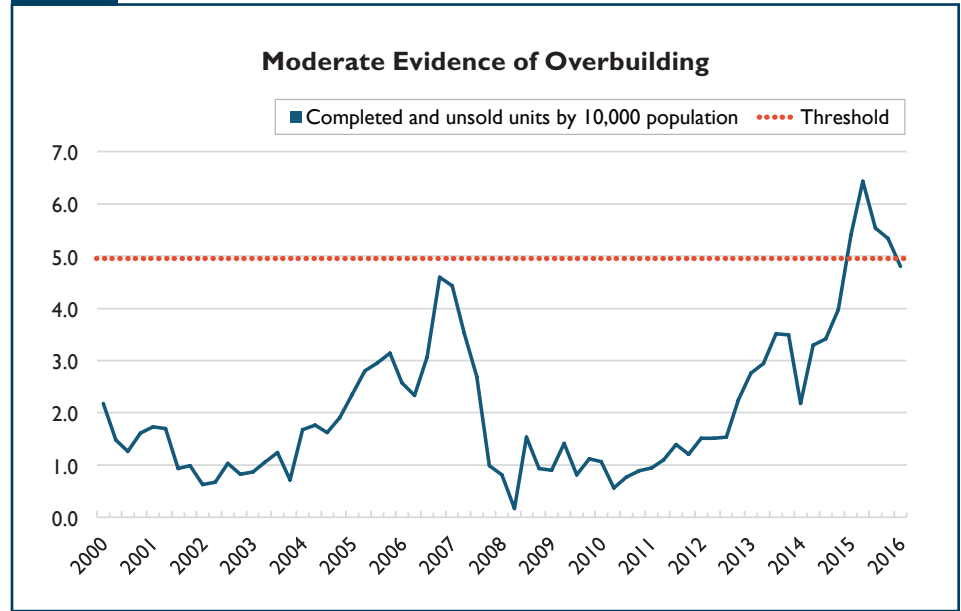
We detect weak evidence of overvaluation in the St. John's CMA. This is due to weaker

economic conditions and a shift in demographic fundamentals as well as declining average MLS® prices. Population growth has been lackluster in the absence of income growth. Recently, both income and house prices have declined in tandem, with prices down seven per cent relative to income also being down about one per cent. This is the first time in almost ten years where house price declines have outpaced income declines on a relative basis. This, combined with weaker employment, provides further evidence of a housing market where homes are priced more appropriately than in the past and remain under pressure.

Overbuilding

Completed and unsold units by 10,000 population has increased significantly since 2011. The vacancy rate also increased materially since 2011 and has remained above four per cent since 2013. St. John's added an average of only 17 rental units a year from 2010 to 2012. Since then, however, 821 new rental units have been added,

Figure 3



Sources: Statistics Canada and CMHC. Last data point: 2016 Q1.

with 271 added in 2013, 329 in 2014 and 221 in 2015. Higher completions of rental units relative to the increase in the CMA's population, brought the vacancy rate up to 4.7 per cent by the fourth quarter of 2015. We detect moderate evidence of overbuilding due to a relatively high inventory of completed and unsold units in the homeowner and condominium

market segments. However, inventory showed a small decline over the three previous quarters as builders continue to hold off on new housing starts in response to lower demand for new home construction throughout the region.

Overview of the Housing Market Assessment analytical framework

To obtain an accurate picture of the overall state of the housing market, it is important to consider multiple data points and lines of evidence rather than relying on just one measure or indicator.

The Housing Market Assessment (HMA) analytical framework provides a comprehensive and integrated view that relies on a combination of signals from several indicators to assess housing market conditions.

Specifically, the framework considers four main factors that may provide an early indication of potentially problematic housing market conditions: (1) overheating when demand outpaces supply; (2) sustained acceleration in house prices; (3) overvaluation of house prices in comparison to levels that can be supported by housing market fundamentals (listed below);

and, (4) overbuilding when the inventory of available housing units is elevated.

For each factor, the framework tests for: (1) the presence or incidence of signals of potentially problematic conditions, but also considers; (2) the intensity of the signals, i.e. how their magnitude compares with their historical average or how consistent they are with known or suspected house price bubbles, such as for Toronto in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and, (3) the persistence of signals over time.

Generally, a situation in which we detect few signals with low intensity or lack of persistence is associated with weak evidence of problematic conditions. Conversely, as the intensity, number, and/or persistence of the signals increases, the likelihood of a factor becoming problematic increases.

The framework takes into account demographic, economic, and financial determinants of the housing market such as population, personal disposable income, and interest rates to detect potentially problematic housing market conditions. The framework also takes into account developments in both resale and residential construction markets.

The framework was developed on the basis of its ability to detect problematic housing market conditions in historical data, such as the house price bubble Toronto experienced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The ability of the HMA to detect current problematic conditions relies on the assumption that historical relationships between prices and fundamental drivers of housing markets have not changed.

Housing Market Assessment Factors

Overheating

Overheating is caused by demand significantly and persistently outpacing the supply of housing. The sales-to-new listings ratio is used as an indicator to assess possible overheating conditions in the existing home market. To identify problematic overheating conditions, the framework compares the sales-to-new listings ratio to thresholds. When demand is strong relative to supply, house prices typically grow at a faster rate. Sustained overheating conditions on the existing home market may lead to acceleration in house prices for existing and new homes. However, as supply and demand begin to balance out, indicators of overheating (and acceleration) would begin to soften and house prices would gradually moderate.

Acceleration in House Prices

Under balanced market conditions, house prices are expected to increase over time, in line with increases in households' cost of

living. House price acceleration occurs when the growth in house prices strengthens over time on a persistent basis. Acceleration in house prices over an extended period can cause their pace of increase to depart from the overall price inflation and eventually lead to overvaluation.

To assess acceleration in house prices, the HMA framework uses a statistical test* that was developed to identify periods of accelerating asset prices.

Overvaluation

Overvaluation is detected when house prices remain significantly above the levels warranted by fundamental drivers of housing markets such as income, population, and actual and expected financing costs.

The HMA framework uses combinations of different house price measures and models to estimate house price levels warranted by fundamental drivers.

The difference between observed house prices and their estimated levels consistent with housing market fundamentals allows for an estimation of the degree of over- and undervaluation. The use of different price measures and models improves the reliability of results.

Overbuilding

Overbuilding is detected when the supply of readily available housing units significantly exceeds demand. In such a context, downward pressure on house prices would occur until the excess supply is eventually absorbed.

To assess overbuilding conditions in the housing market, the HMA framework uses two indicators that relate to the supply of readily available housing units: the rental vacancy rate, and the inventory of completed and unsold housing units per 10,000 population. The HMA framework compares the current level and recent trends in these indicators with thresholds.

Note 1: Colour codes indicate the level of evidence of problematic conditions. The HMA reflects a comprehensive framework that not only tests for the presence or incidence of signals of potentially problematic conditions, but also considers the intensity of signals (that is, how far the indicator is from its historical average) and the persistence of signals over time. Generally, low intensity and persistence are associated with a lower potential of upcoming problematic conditions. As the number of persistent signals increases, the evidence of a problematic condition developing increases.

Note 2: Results at the CMA level are not segmented by housing type or neighbourhood. They represent an assessment of the entire CMA. However, specific CMA reports provide further detailed analysis of these markets.

Note 3: The colour scale extends to red only for those factors that have multiple indicators signaling significant incidence, intensity and persistence of potentially problematic conditions. As a result, only overvaluation and overbuilding can receive a red rating, since they are assessed using more than one indicator.

Note 4: To ensure the framework is as current as possible, on a regular basis, we undertake a model selection process whereby our house price models for overvaluation are tested for statistical significance at the national and CMA level. The result of this process may change the number of indicators of a problematic condition from the previous assessment.

* See Phillips, Wu and Yu (2008) "Explosive Behaviour in the 1990s NASDAQ When Did Exuberance Escalate Asset Values?" for further details on the methodology.

CMHC—HOME TO CANADIANS

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has been Canada's national housing agency for almost 70 years.

CMHC helps Canadians meet their housing needs. As Canada's authority on housing, we contribute to the stability of the housing market and financial system, provide support for Canadians in housing need, and offer objective housing research and information to Canadian governments, consumers and the housing industry. Prudent risk management, strong corporate governance and transparency are cornerstones of our operations.

For more information, visit our website at www.cmhc.ca or follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

You can also reach us by phone at 1-800-668-2642 or by fax at 1-800-245-9274.

Outside Canada call 613-748-2003 or fax to 613-748-2016.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation supports the Government of Canada policy on access to information for people with disabilities. If you wish to obtain this publication in alternative formats, call 1-800-668-2642.

The Market Analysis Centre's (MAC) electronic suite of national standardized products is available for free on CMHC's website. You can view, print, download or subscribe to future editions and get market information e-mailed automatically to you the same day it is released. It's quick and convenient! Go to www.cmhc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain

For more information on MAC and the wealth of housing market information available to you, visit us today at www.cmhc.ca/housingmarketinformation

To subscribe to printed editions of MAC publications, call 1-800-668-2642.

©2016 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. All rights reserved. CMHC grants reasonable rights of use of this publication's content solely for personal, corporate or public policy research, and educational purposes. This permission consists of the right to use the content for general reference purposes in written analyses and in the reporting of results, conclusions, and forecasts including the citation of limited amounts of supporting data extracted from this publication. Reasonable and limited rights of use are also permitted in commercial publications subject to the above criteria, and CMHC's right to request that such use be discontinued for any reason.

Any use of the publication's content must include the source of the information, including statistical data, acknowledged as follows:

Source: CMHC (or "Adapted from CMHC," if appropriate), name of product, year and date of publication issue.

Other than as outlined above, the content of the publication cannot be reproduced or transmitted to any person or, if acquired by an organization, to users outside the organization. Placing the publication, in whole or part, on a website accessible to the public or on any website accessible to persons not directly employed by the organization is not permitted. To use the content of any CMHC Market Analysis publication for any purpose other than the general reference purposes set out above or to request permission to reproduce large portions of, or entire CMHC Market Analysis publications, please complete the [CMHC Copyright request form](#) and email it to CMHC's Canadian Housing Information Centre at chic@cmhc.ca. For permission, please provide CHIC with the following information: Publication's name, year and date of issue.

Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, no portion of the content may be translated from English or French into any other language without the prior written permission of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The information, analyses and opinions contained in this publication are based on various sources believed to be reliable, but their accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The information, analyses and opinions shall not be taken as representations for which Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation or any of its employees shall incur responsibility.

Housing market intelligence you can count on



FREE REPORTS AVAILABLE ON-LINE

- Canadian Housing Statistics
- Condominium Owners Report
- Housing Information Monthly
- Housing Market Outlook, Canada
- Housing Market Outlook, Highlight Reports – Canada and Regional
- Housing Market Outlook, Major Centres
- Housing Market Tables: Selected South Central Ontario Centres
- Housing Now, Canada
- Housing Now, Major Centres
- Housing Now, Regional
- Monthly Housing Statistics
- Northern Housing Outlook Report
- Preliminary Housing Start Data
- Rental Market Provincial Highlight Reports
- Rental Market Reports, Major Centres
- Rental Market Statistics
- Residential Construction Digest, Prairie Centres
- Seniors' Housing Reports

Get the market intelligence you need today!

Click www.cmhc.ca/housingmarketinformation to view, download or subscribe.

CMHC's Market Analysis Centre e-reports provide a wealth of detailed local, provincial, regional and national market information.

- **Forecasts and Analysis –**
Future-oriented information about local, regional and national housing trends.
- **Statistics and Data –**
Information on current housing market activities – starts, rents, vacancy rates and much more.

HOUSING MARKET INFORMATION PORTAL

The housing data you want, the way you want it

Information in one central location.

Quick and easy access.

Neighbourhood level data.

cmhc.ca/hmpiportal

