

FEMALES DRIVE HOUSING DEMAND AND HAMMER AWAY AT RENOVATIONS

– Royal LePage survey finds 25% of women searching for a home are looking for a ‘fixer-upper’ and plan to do the work themselves –

TORONTO, April 17, 2007 – With a chequebook firmly in one hand and a hammer confidently in the other single female homebuyers of all ages continue to knock down barriers by purchasing real estate and tackling home repairs. Currently, 30 per cent of single, never-before married women own their own home, while 45 per cent of divorced or separated women and 64 per cent of widowed women are homeowners, according to the Royal LePage Female Buyers Report released today.

Poll results found that of the single, never-before married women who are not yet homeowners, 31 per cent say they will potentially purchase their next home within three years. While more than half (56%) of women who own and rent who intend to purchase in the next three years are shopping for a property in the \$150,000 to \$350,000 price range, 10 per cent have slightly fatter pocket books and are looking for a property priced from \$350,000.

“The notable upswing in real estate activity among females is not surprising given that women are earning higher salaries than ever before,” said Lisa da Rocha, vice president, marketing, Royal LePage Real Estate Services. “There has been a shift in mindset whereby women have distanced themselves from the traditional notion that you must *first* find Mr. Right and then together you buy a home. Our findings reveal that 66 per cent of women who intend to purchase would not find the process of buying a home on their own intimidating.”

Preparing for Home Ownership

Women are embracing the home buying process and taking charge. They are readying themselves for bidding wars and willing to take on various types of home renovations.

Of the women polled who own or rent and intend to purchase a home in the next three years, 56 per cent are willing to participate in bidding wars, in comparison to only 49 per cent of men who are willing to compete.

(more)

The frequency of bidding wars tends to vary across regions, and also fluctuates among buyer demographics. For example, in Vancouver, female buyers are used to the all too common bidding wars, according to qualitative research. In Vancouver, the price of entry is usually attached to a bidding war. If it is a property they want, women are not deterred from multiple offer situations.

When current female homeowners and renters who intend to purchase in the next three years were asked, "*When searching for your home, which type of home would you be looking for?*" 25 per cent said that they are looking for a 'fixer-upper' and plan to do the work themselves, while only nine per cent will hire a contractor.

While the rise in female homebuyers is prevalent in all the major Canadian cities examined, some regional variances were noted. Based on qualitative research, women in Toronto, Halifax and Regina are more prone to take on home renovations than women in other cities. In Halifax and Regina younger female purchasers will flirt with more cosmetic home renovations such as painting and flooring to enhance and update their properties. In contrast, in Toronto, older, more mature women consider larger renovations as a great way to increase their home's equity.

"Single women now play a significant role in the housing market. Eager to experience the pride of ownership and exercise their independence, we are seeing growing numbers of women buying their first home on their own, trading-up homes as they progress professionally and taking on home renovations," added da Rocha. "Today's woman is much more financially astute than her counterpart a decade ago, and is well versed in real estate as a solid long-term investment."

Challenging Traditions

More groomzilla than bridezilla? When it comes to signing on the dotted line, it is a mortgage certificate, not a marriage certificate that women favour. When asked, "*Given the chance, how likely would you be to go without a wedding reception in order to put a larger down payment on your first home?*" 34 per cent of women who will purchase their first home in the next three years said they were very likely to go without a reception, in comparison to 27 per cent of men who gave the same answer. And it seems both men and women have become less traditional with each passing year. A Royal LePage survey commissioned in 2004 found that 30 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men who were planning to buy their first home were very likely to forgo a wedding reception in order to put a larger down payment on their home.

Additional Poll Findings:

- Among those who own and rent and intend to purchase a home/condo in the next three years, men and women both rank equally (81%) taking out a mortgage from a bank, however, nine per cent of men said they would rely on their family to pay for their entire home, in comparison to only three per cent of women.
- Of women who own, who don't intend to purchase in the next three years, when asked, "*Which one of the following motivations most influenced your decision to purchase your home?*" the top three responses included: it makes more sense than renting (36%), want to put my money into a good investment (22%) and pride of ownership (13%).
- Among women who are intending to purchase in the next three years, when asked, "*Which methods will you use to educate yourself about home purchasing?*" the top three responses cited were speaking with a real estate agent (83%), speaking with friends and relatives (78%) and using real estate and financial websites (64%).

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Over the past five years, female buyers have started to represent a significantly larger portion of home buying activity in **Halifax's** real estate market – with a notable upswing in activity taking place over the last 18 months. Females are driving a large portion of condominium market activity, as most young professionals favour the convenience and low maintenance lifestyle. A small but growing portion of young female purchasers are buying homes requiring renovation and maintenance. Mature, divorced or widowed women in Halifax are often downsizing from a larger home, but are looking to maintain the lifestyle their previous home afforded them. Areas such as Basinview and Bedford, or suburban areas such as Dartmouth and lower Sackville are most popular among single-parent females for their close proximity to excellent schools, while Downtown Halifax is popular among single-female buyers looking to be close to work and city amenities. Single women are typically looking for properties priced at \$200,000 and above.

In **Montreal**, home buying activity among females has increased significantly over the last three to four years. Activity growth has been supported by the larger number of women in executive and professional careers, which has afforded them the financial freedom to purchase a home on their own. Women of all age groups tend to favour condominiums for their maintenance-free lifestyle, and generally spend an average of \$300,000 on such properties. They tend to place the style,

design, and security of a property at a high priority, and are not interested in undertaking renovations. The centre of Montreal is a popular neighbourhood for female purchasers who are looking to stay close to the city centre, while Old Montreal offers heritage-style properties in a desirable location.

In **Ottawa**, home buying activity among females has increased steadily over the last three to five years, with a noticeable upswing over the last year. Most single women with job security and a solid income are making the leap from renting to home ownership. To get a foothold in the market, it is common for first-time female purchasers to receive financial support for a down payment from their families. Some first-time female purchasers are leapfrogging to the move-up home category, looking for properties priced between \$250,000 and \$300,000. They tend to favour condominiums located in a safe, centrally located neighbourhood. Seasoned, mature female buyers also account for a significant portion of the purchasing activity among women, typically spending more than their younger counterparts, often upwards of \$350,000.

Women in **Toronto** purchasing real estate on their own is a burgeoning trend that has grown exponentially over the past five years, and one that is expected to continue. Driving this dynamic is a combination of factors including the desire of professional women to live downtown, and the realization that real estate is a solid long-term investment. Typically, first-time female buyers are financially conservative and gravitate to the maintenance-free lifestyle of condominiums. Areas such as King West, Queen West, St. Lawrence Market and the Yonge and Bloor area appeal to this demographic. In contrast, a more mature buyer purchasing her second or third home will likely opt for a freehold property. Younger buyers tend to buy properties in the price range of \$200,000 to \$400,000, while the more mature buyer typically spends upwards of \$400,000.

In the last five years, the number of female buyers entering **Winnipeg's** housing market has risen dramatically – a trend noted among all types of female purchasers including those who are single, divorced and widowed. In Winnipeg, first-time female buyers are investment-driven and want to ensure that their property will appreciate. Women in this category typically favour bungalow-style homes in established, safe neighbourhoods, and tend to spend in the price range of \$100,000 to \$150,000. Among more mature buyers transitioning from one home to another, there is a growing trend to move into condominiums. They will typically spend in the price range of \$200,000 to \$300,000.

Activity among female purchasers has increased significantly over the last three years in **Regina**, with a notable upswing in activity over the last year, corresponding with overall growth in the city's housing market. Regardless of age, women tend to rank safety, space and style as the most important features when searching for a home. Not surprisingly, a significant portion of women in Regina favour the maintenance-free lifestyle of condominiums and town homes that are within close proximity to the amenities of the city centre and are priced between \$100,000 and \$160,000. More mature buyers also opt for maintenance-free properties, such as luxury condominiums but are willing to spend more than their younger counterparts, at times up to \$250,000.

Edmonton has experienced an increase in women buying real estate on their own over the past five years and a steady rise is anticipated to continue. Women are entering the housing market for several reasons and with different needs: first-time homebuyers are typically 25 to 35 years old, well educated, and are looking for a condominium or townhouse that offers security and a maintenance-free lifestyle. Popular areas for this cohort include the District of Oliver, Riverdale and Rosedale – attracting buyers in the price range of \$285,000 and up. Professional women looking to trade up or divorced women entering the market have equity from their previous home. This group tends to favour single-family dwellings in an established area such as Laurier Heights, Strachcona or Parkview, or conversely look to some of the brand new areas such as Glousterbury or MacEwan. Buyers aged 50-plus typically spend in the range of \$250,000 to \$450,000.

In **Calgary**, females, whether they are buying for the first time or trading up, are playing an active role in the housing market. Recently, the city experienced a surge in activity among young, single, female buyers, and more moderate levels of activity among divorced or widowed women. The increase in 25 to 35 year-old women purchasing homes on their own is reflective of a healthy economy, low interest rates, higher incomes and a spike in in-migration. In Calgary's urban core, condominiums are favoured by first-time female homebuyers. Affordability, proximity to downtown amenities, and the maintenance-free lifestyle are key factors. Condominiums in Mission, Cliff Bungalow, Lower Mount Royal and Kensington priced between \$330,000 and \$400,000 are the most popular. For first-time female buyers preferring to buy a single-family home, McKenzie Towne is a favoured neighbourhood where a detached property typically ranges from \$350,000 to \$450,000.

While women have always played a significant role in **Vancouver's** housing market, their impact in the past three to five years has become increasingly more profound. Among first-time homebuyers condominiums in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range are typically the most desired; Kitsilano and

downtown are two of the more popular areas. Divorced women and move-up buyers in the city typically gravitate to half-duplex townhouses and detached houses in the price range of \$700,000 to \$1-million. In order to provide additional income, there is a growing trend among mature single buyers to purchase properties with rental units.

Typical Price Range of Female Buyers

	First-Time Female Buyer's Price Range	Mature Female Buyer's Price Range
Halifax	\$200,000 +	\$200,000 +
Montreal	\$300,000	\$300,000
Ottawa	\$250,000 - \$300,000	\$350,000 +
Toronto	\$200,000 - \$400,000	\$400,000 +
Winnipeg	\$100,000 - \$150,000	\$200,000 - \$300,000
Regina	\$100,000 - \$160,000	up to \$250,000
Edmonton	\$285,000 +	\$250,000 - \$450,000
Calgary	\$330,000 - \$450,000	\$400,000 - \$450,000
Vancouver	\$300,000 - \$400,000	\$700,000 - \$1,000,000

Source: *Qualitative Research, Royal LePage*

Methodology

The report comprises a nationwide research poll of home buying attitudes and actions of Canadian men and women (conducted by Maritz Research) as well as a regional market analysis of trends and activities with respect to female homebuyers.

Maritz Research conducted a telephone survey among a representative, random sample of 1,002 Canadian females and 1,000 males aged 18 years and older. Within the female and male sample sizes, the results are considered accurate to within +/-3.10%, 19 times out of 20 for both. Interviewing was conducted between February 15 and February 20, 2007.

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