



## Chamber provides solutions to Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force

A targeted response to specific problem areas, rather than wholesale changes to the broader development and building markets, was the key message in a written submission by The Calgary Chamber of Commerce to the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force last week.

The Task Force was in Calgary on February 28th to solicit suggestions on making affordable housing more available and accessible in Alberta.

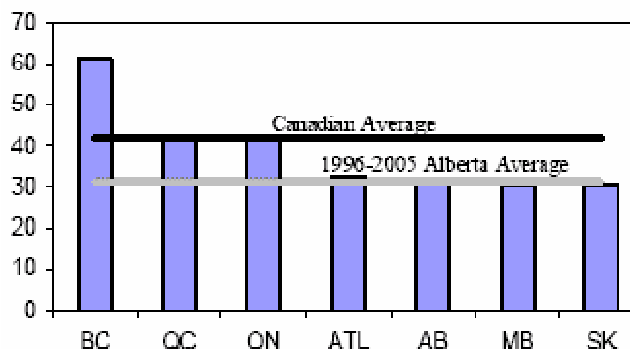
The Chamber's recommendations focused on four main areas:

- Strategic leadership – create an Alberta Commission and develop a 10-year plan for affordable housing supply
- Land supply – develop policies and programs to dedicate surplus or underutilized provincial properties (i.e. abandoned school sites)
- Development incentives – enable municipalities to streamline regulatory processes, such as the fast tracking of permits, waiving of permit fees, and elimination of development fee levies for affordable housing; and
- Secondary suites – legalize and ensure appropriate building and safety standards

“In the past, Alberta’s housing market has functioned well, and has maintained a balance between supply and demand to allow affordability,” says Heather Douglas, President & CEO. From 1996 – 2005, Alberta housing affordability was 10 per cent below the Canadian average (based on the home ownership costs for a standard two-storey). “However, with explosive job creation, in migration has reached record levels and placed stress in all areas of our community, including housing.”

### Housing Affordability Index (2005)

(Pre-tax household income absorbed by home ownership costs for a standard two-storey)



Source: Economic Spotlight – Alberta's Housing Market, Alberta Finance, June 12, 2006  
(created from RBC Financial Group Data)

2006 figures indicate provincial housing prices increased 29 per cent, more than double the highest growth rate on record. Alberta has now surpassed Ontario as the second most expensive resale market in Canada.

“Add to this extremely low vacancy rate (below one per cent) in the province and rising rents and you have a major component of the ‘Alberta Advantage’ in jeopardy”, says Douglas.



Business understands the link between housing costs and the attraction and retention of labour. In a 2007 survey, for the first time, Chamber members identified affordable housing among the top five priority concerns.

“The challenge is to respond in a way to the specific problem areas – ability of low income earners to purchase housing and the availability and affordability of rental accommodation.”