

# Time to buy is NOW

Any potential homebuyers sitting on their wallets while they wait for the best deal possible could be disappointed if they wait much longer.

The Realtors Association of Edmonton reported that activity in the housing resale market picked up in April, with sales of 1,843 units that month.

That's up 33.6% from March and it's even up slightly - 1.1% - from April 2008.

The association suggests that could be due in part to pricing. The average sale price last month was \$353,386, down 8.5% from a year ago, when the average price for April was at \$386,033.

Month over month, on the other hand, average home prices rose slightly, up 1% in April over March.

It's reasonable to expect that trend to continue. In a release

from the association last week, RAE president Charlie Ponde points out that more people are moving to Edmonton than are leaving the region.

That positive in-migration will only put upward pressure on demand for housing. Employment remains relatively healthy in the region, house prices are attractive and interest rates are at historic lows - all factors contributing to a potential turnaround in the market.

"First-time buyers are entering the market because of historically low interest rates, and renovation incentives are encouraging move-up buyers to consider relocation," said Ponde.

On the new-home side, CMHC statistics for March show an existing inventory of 925 units, down from the peak of 1,090 experienced last August.

Meanwhile, the median purchase price for new single-detached homes was \$488,000, up almost 4% from March of 2008.

Builders have scaled back activity compared to the boom of a couple of years ago but, anecdotally, spec homes that languished for much of the past year are now sprouting "Sold" signs and new foundations are being poured throughout the region - all indications of recovering demand.

With signs that the U.S. - and thus, the world's - economy is beginning to turn the corner, our corner of the continent could see signs of renewed vigour over the coming year.

So, for anyone looking for the best time to make a deal, that time may be now.

