

Sask. leads in 2007 building permits

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Saskatchewan is leading the nation in building permit growth, a Statistics Canada report released Wednesday shows.

The value of building permits in the province rose 42.3 per cent from 2006 to 2007, up to \$1.62 billion last year from \$1.14 billion in 2006. During that time, sales of residential permits rose 74.2 per cent while sales of non-residential building permits rose 17.9 per cent. The figures show that Saskatchewan's economy continues to gain strength, said Premier Brad Wall.



"Building permits and the capital investment required are signs of a strong and growing economy and confidence in the future," Wall stated in a release.

CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Workers from Miners Construction Ltd. work Wednesday on the site of a new World Gym location on Nelson Road

From November to December, non-residential building permits in Saskatchewan rose 135.8 per cent to \$120 million from nearly \$51 million in November. Residential permits, meanwhile, rose 43 per cent to \$96 million in December from \$67 million one month prior, according to the report.

The value of building permits in Saskatoon last year rose more than 76 per cent over 2006 due to demand from both residential and commercial sectors. According to the building permits report, \$740.9 million in building permits were sold in Saskatoon in 2007, up from \$420.8 million worth in 2006. Between November and December last year, sales of the permits rose by 143 per cent, to \$136 million in December from \$56 million in November.

In Regina, building permits rose nearly 45 per cent to \$27.8 million in December from \$19.2 million in November. On the year, permits dropped 0.1 per cent to \$371 million at the end of 2007 from \$371.5 one year earlier.

Nationwide, building permits hit a record yearly level with gains in both the residential and non-residential sectors.

Municipalities issued \$6.1 billion worth of building permits in December, up 0.4 per cent from a month earlier. Many economists had expected permit values to be flat in December.

For the year, the value totalled \$74.3 billion, a 12.1 per cent increase from the previous record of \$66.3 billion in 2006.

Every province posted gains except for Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

"The strong level of employment, the increase in the disposable income, tight apartment vacancy rates in several centres and attractive financing options continued to stimulate the housing sector in 2007," the report said.

"This result contrasted sharply with the situation in the United States, where the number of new privately owned units approved fell by 25.3 per cent in 2007."

Residential permits were up 1.8 per cent to \$3.89 billion in December, the agency said, while non-residential permits fell two per cent to \$2.16 billion.

For the year, the number of multi-family permits totalled 121,170 units -- a jump of 6.1 per cent from 2006 and the highest level since 1977 -- while single-family units slipped two per cent to 116,700.

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