



LUXURY BUYERS MOSTLY LOCAL, STUDY SHOWS

The most expensive condo ever sold in Vancouver - this two-level suite at the Fairmont Pacific Rim - went for \$25 million in May.

The high-end housing market in the Lower Mainland is doing fine, thank you very much, with stronger sales in the top-tier sector than in most other areas, according to a series of reports released in the past week.

In a national study of luxury home sales, Sotheby's International Realty Canada found that the local high-end residential real estate market is entering the second half of 2013 with "positive momentum."

The Metro region saw 1,239 sales of high-end properties - defined as homes listed at over \$1 million - in the first half of this year. This is a 57 per cent increase over the second half of 2012, but a 6 per

cent decline from the first six months of 2012.

The biggest increase was seen in sales of homes with list prices over \$2 million. Sales of residential properties between \$2 million and \$4 million increased by 78 per cent, and home sales over \$4 million went up by almost 70 per cent.

According to Sotheby's high-end home sales by type from January to June of this year were:

- Condominiums: 131 units sold - an increase of 26 per cent over the second half of 2012;
- Attached homes: 102 units - an increase of 36 per cent; and
- Single-family homes: 528 units - an increase of 56 per cent.

The study found that 60 per cent of high-end home buyers were locals, while 40 per cent were international buyers. The latter were primarily from China, but include a "recent surge" in buyers from Iran and the United States.

"I am surprised the domestic number isn't higher," said Sotheby's sales executive Mark Lester, noting that Metro Vancouver boasts the highest median home prices in Canada.

Recent Real Estate Board statistics show that the most expensive the market, the higher the sales. For example, last month more detached houses sold on the West Side of Vancouver (145), where the median price is \$2.05 million, than in any other market. Among

suburban markets, the most expensive area - Richmond - also had the highest detached sales last month.

In the Fraser Valley, White Rock/South Surrey and Central Surrey have the highest median detached house prices, at \$775,000 and \$602,000, respectively, but together accounted for the highest number of house sales in June. Second place went to Langley, which had the next highest median house price, at \$567,000.

Buying at the high-end pays off, statistics show. The typical increase in value in the Lower Mainland's three most expensive housing markets over the past five years was 27 per cent, compared to 11 per cent for the market as a whole.