

https://www.thecanadianpressnews.ca/business/people-are-panicking-snowbirds-rush-to-sell-florida-homes-as-loonie-tanks/article_57cdb2df-34dc-53df-86de-01cbbd0f849a.html

‘People are panicking’: Snowbirds rush to sell Florida homes as loonie tanks

Christopher Reynolds The Canadian Press
Jan 28, 2025



Snowbirds are scrambling to sell their homes in Florida as a weak loonie and high insurance costs drive a Canadian exodus from the sunshine state. People walk along the beach in Surfside, Fla. on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024. THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP/Lynne Sladky

LS

MONTREAL - Cesidia Cedrone has been soaking up the rays at her Florida condo every winter since 2011.

“Sunshine all the time. Don’t have to shovel snow. The beach, the sand...” the Ontarian said from her second home in Hallandale Beach, halfway between Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

Last week, her retirement reverie came to an end as Cedrone and her husband signed the closing papers on their home sale.

“Things changed so drastically. The Canadian dollar is not at par with the U.S. dollar,” she said. “That was behind our major decision to sell.”

Other reasons played a role too — higher insurance rates, taxes and condo fees.

“For us Canadians, it’s a double whammy,” Cedrone said, pointing to a loonie that trades for roughly 69 American cents, on top of rising maintenance costs.

“We love this place. But it came to a point now — we are in our 70s — and it’s cheaper for me to come here two months and rent.”

Cedrone is not alone. Many snowbirds are scrambling to sell their homes in Florida as a weak loonie and high insurance costs drive a Canadian exodus from the sunshine state.

Canadians made up nearly one-quarter of foreign sellers in Florida between April 2023 and March 2024 versus 11 per cent in the same period a year earlier, according to a National Realtors Association report.

Real estate broker Alexandra DuPont, who sells properties largely to Quebecers in southeast Florida, says she’s juggling twice her typical workload with 30-plus listings.

“I’ve never had this much in a decade. I picked up three new listings on Monday. That’s never happened to me in one day,” she said last week.

Properties used to last on the market for a day or two before being snapped up, said her father and real estate partner, Sylvain DuPont.

“Now the minimum in southwest Florida is 90 days, and they’re still not selling. Inventory’s growing by the day,” he said, noting most of his clients are Ontarians and Quebecers.

“We feel that the market is going to collapse pretty soon ... People are panicking now.”

As for whether Donald Trump’s return to the White House helped drive away homeowners — the U.S. president has taken an aggressive stance on Canada, threatening across-the-board tariffs and calling its sovereignty into question — Sylvain DuPont echoed the observations of several brokers and sellers: “I don’t think it’s about politics; it’s about money, the economy, inflation.”

Residents and realtors say the higher cost of living, risk of damage from natural disasters and a growing taste for travel to different destinations each winter account for the flight from Florida.

The Canadian dollar has been hovering below 70 cents U.S. in recent weeks, continuing a decline that kicked off in early October because of a slower pace of rate cuts by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

“In Canadian dollars, last week I paid \$18 for 18 eggs,” Cedrone said.

But departures by Canadians were picking up even before that slide.

Insurance premiums have shot up in recent years because of more extreme weather, costing Cedrone more than US\$16,000 a year — 10 times the rate when she first bought the property.

She also paid nearly US\$4,000 in taxes versus US\$1,500 a decade and a half ago.

Meanwhile, property upgrades required by stricter building codes meant residents had to cough up thousands more over the last few years, forcing the couple to remortgage their second home.

Some would prefer to roam rather than roost.

“Younger couples or people, they want to travel. They’ll spend a winter in Portugal, or they’ll go to Miami, they’ll go to Mexico, or they’ll go to the Dominican Republic,” said Sylvain, referring to newer retirees.

“Buying a place in Florida is like our grandparents and our parents used to do. The youngsters, they don’t do so anymore,” he said. “They don’t want to be in the same place.”

Especially in certain places.

Last fall, hurricanes Helene and Milton tore through Florida, causing US\$40 billion in insured losses. The total amounted to 63 per cent of all insured losses caused by severe storms across the globe last year, according to a new report from reinsurance broker Gallagher Re.

Those back-to-back cyclones followed Hurricane Ian in fall 2022, whose US\$113 billion in damages made it the third-costliest storm in the country’s history. Six Florida insurance carriers folded the following year.

Homeowners in that state now pay more than three times the national average to insure their properties, according to the Insurance Information Institute, making Florida the costliest home insurance state in the U.S.

Aside from the effect of climate change on premiums, there’s also the question of safety and a perpetual sense of precariousness in storm-prone regions.

“I ain’t going nowhere that’s got hurricanes,” said Laurie Lavine, an Arizona-based realtor whose clientele consists largely of Canadians.

A former Albertan, Lavine said most clients share his sentiments.

Nonetheless, he’s observed a recent surge in listings from Canadians in his desert state recently. Again, expense is the bottom line.

“It’s costing them \$20,000 a year just to have the property, between utilities and taxes and all the carrying costs of owning a property down here. They’re just not coming down as much as they want to because of the Canadian dollar,” he said.

Lavine said he’ll be handling eight listings — all Canadian-owned — in the next few weeks, twice his typical load.

Nor is the departure strictly from stationary homes.

“The RV park that we’re in is normally full of Canadians and Americans from cold weather places,” he said from the Phoenix area. “This year it’s down 30 per cent.”

This report by The Canadian Press was first published Jan. 28, 2025.

The Canadian Press. All rights reserved.