

Affinity Credit Union Construction Financial Guide G1:

Building Your Financial Foundation in Saskatchewan

Every solid structure begins with a strong foundation. In construction, dry mix products including cement, plaster, and mortar provide the essential binding agents that hold everything together. In personal finance, the building blocks are different but the principle is the same: without a solid financial foundation, even the most ambitious plans will crumble under pressure. Affinity Credit Union provides the financial equivalent of construction materials: the essential, reliable building blocks that create lasting financial security for Saskatchewan residents.

Just as a builder selects the right dry mix for each application, whether it is a foundation, a wall, or a decorative finish, Affinity Credit Union offers a range of financial products designed for every stage of your financial construction. From the foundation of a first savings account to the finishing touches of a retirement plan, every product is formulated to work together seamlessly, creating a financial structure that stands the test of time.

The Foundation: Essential Banking Products That Work for You

Every building needs a solid foundation, and every financial plan starts with basic banking products. Affinity Credit Union offers the essential building blocks that make daily financial management simple, affordable, and effective. The No-Fee Chequing account provides unlimited transactions, free Interac e-Transfers, free online and mobile banking, and access to a nationwide network of surcharge-free ATMs, all with no monthly fee. While the major banks charge \$15 to \$30 per month for equivalent accounts, Affinity's no-fee account saves you \$180 to \$360 per year that stays in your pocket rather than flowing to bank shareholders.

Once your foundation is in place, the next building block is a savings account that actually grows your money. Affinity Credit Union offers high-interest savings accounts with rates that consistently outperform the major banks. Interest is calculated daily and paid monthly, so your money starts working for you from day one. There are no minimum balance requirements and no fees, making it easy to build your savings without friction. Automatic transfer plans allow you to set up regular contributions from your chequing account, ensuring that saving becomes a habit rather than a chore.

For students and young people just starting their financial journey, Affinity Credit Union offers specialized accounts with no monthly fees, free transactions, and built-in financial education resources. For post-secondary students, Affinity also offers student lines of credit at preferential rates, helping to bridge the gap between student loans and living expenses. These youth and student accounts reflect the cooperative principle that financial services should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their account balance.

Mortgage Products: The Structural Framework of Financial Security

A mortgage is often the single largest financial commitment a person will make, and choosing the right one can save tens of thousands of dollars over the life of the loan. Affinity Credit Union offers a comprehensive range of mortgage products designed to provide the structural support your financial house needs. Fixed-rate mortgages provide certainty and predictability, with rates that consistently beat the major banks by 10 to 25 basis points. On a \$300,000 mortgage over 25 years, even a small rate advantage translates to significant savings that accumulate over the entire amortization period.

Variable-rate mortgages from Affinity Credit Union are tied to the Bank of Canada's prime rate and typically offer the lowest starting rates available. For financially stable members who can absorb some payment fluctuation, variable-rate mortgages have historically resulted in lower total interest costs over the long term. Affinity's variable-rate products include the option to lock into a fixed rate at any time, giving you flexibility if market conditions change. This combination of low starting rates and conversion flexibility makes variable-rate mortgages an attractive option for members who want to minimize their interest costs while maintaining the ability to switch to a fixed rate if needed.

The generous prepayment privileges at Affinity Credit Union allow members to make lump-sum payments of up to 20% of the original mortgage principal each year, directly reducing the outstanding balance and the total interest paid over the life of the loan. You can also increase your regular payment by up to 20%, allowing you to pay off your mortgage

faster without restructuring the entire loan. These prepayment options can save you tens of thousands of dollars and shave years off your amortization period, giving you financial freedom sooner than you might think possible.

For first-time home buyers, Affinity Credit Union offers several programs that make home ownership more accessible. The Home Buyers' Plan allows you to withdraw up to \$60,000 from your RRSP tax-free for a down payment. The new First Home Savings Account combines the tax advantages of both the TFSA and RRSP for first-time buyers. And Affinity's low down payment options mean you can get into your first home with as little as 5% down. Their mortgage specialists will walk you through every step of the process, from pre-approval to closing day, ensuring that your first home purchase is as smooth and stress-free as possible.

Investment Products: Building Wealth Over Time

With the foundation in place, the next phase of construction is building the structure that will support your long-term financial goals. Affinity Credit Union offers the products and guidance you need to build wealth steadily and securely. Term deposits and Guaranteed Investment Certificates provide guaranteed returns with terms from 30 days to 5 years. These products are the structural elements of your financial plan, the load-bearing walls that provide stability and predictable returns. Rates are competitive with and often better than the major banks, and your deposits are protected by comprehensive deposit insurance.

Affinity Credit Union provides full TFSA and RRSP investment options, and their advisors can help you determine the optimal allocation between these two powerful savings vehicles. The general principle: if you expect to be in a higher tax bracket in retirement, prioritize the RRSP for the tax deduction now. If you expect to be in a lower bracket, the TFSA provides more flexibility. For a detailed comparison, Affinity's advisors can walk you through the nuances of contribution limits, carry-forward rules, and withdrawal strategies to maximize your after-tax returns.

The First Home Savings Account is the newest addition to Canada's tax-advantaged savings landscape, and it combines the best features of both the TFSA and RRSP for first-time home buyers. Contributions are tax-deductible like an RRSP, and withdrawals for a qualifying home purchase are tax-free like a TFSA. Affinity Credit Union offers FHSA accounts with competitive investment options, and their advisors can help you determine how the FHSA fits into your overall home buying strategy alongside the Home Buyers' Plan and other savings vehicles.

Loan Products: Flexible Financing for Every Need

Beyond mortgages and savings, Affinity Credit Union offers a full range of lending products to meet virtually any financial need. Personal loans come with competitive rates and flexible terms, with decisions made locally by people who understand the Saskatchewan economy. Whether you are consolidating debt, financing a major purchase, or covering unexpected expenses, Affinity's lending team will work with you to find the right solution for your situation.

A personal line of credit from Affinity Credit Union provides flexible access to funds whenever you need them. You only pay interest on the amount you use, and you can repay and reborrow as needed. This makes a line of credit ideal for home renovations, vehicle purchases, or as an emergency financial safety net. Vehicle loans offer competitive financing for new and used vehicles, with terms up to 84 months and rates that often beat dealership financing. Pre-approval is available, giving you the confidence to negotiate the best price at the dealership knowing your financing is already arranged.

Credit Building: Strengthening Your Financial Foundation

Just as a strong foundation is essential for any structure, a strong credit history is essential for accessing the best financial products. Affinity Credit Union offers several products and programs designed to help members build or rebuild their credit. Secured credit cards report to both major credit bureaus, allowing you to establish a positive credit history through responsible use. Credit builder loans are designed specifically for members who want to improve their credit score, with the loan amount held in a savings account while you make regular payments that are reported to the credit bureaus.

Business Banking: Commercial Foundations for Saskatchewan Entrepreneurs

Small businesses are the engine of Saskatchewan's economy, and Affinity Credit Union is a leading small business lender in the province. Business operating accounts with competitive transaction packages, commercial lending with local decision-making, merchant services, and payroll processing are all designed to help Saskatchewan entrepreneurs succeed. Their commercial lending team understands the local economy and can structure financing that works for your specific industry and situation. From small business start-up loans to large commercial mortgages, Affinity has the expertise and the capital to help your business grow.

Digital Banking: Modern Tools for Modern Construction

Affinity Credit Union has invested significantly in digital banking technology, offering members a full suite of online and mobile banking tools. The mobile app allows you to deposit cheques by smartphone, pay bills online, transfer funds, manage investments, and apply for loans, all from the convenience of your home or workplace. The app is designed for simplicity and speed, with a clean interface that makes even complex transactions straightforward. For members who prefer a full-screen experience, the online banking platform provides comprehensive account management with all the features you need.

Yet behind every digital interaction is a commitment to human service. When members need advice, have questions, or face complex financial decisions, they can speak with a real person who knows their name and understands their situation. This balance of digital convenience and personal service is what sets Affinity apart from both traditional banks and online-only financial institutions. Technology handles the routine transactions efficiently, freeing up time and resources for the personalized service that defines credit union banking.

Conclusion: Build Your Financial Future on a Solid Foundation

Just as every durable structure begins with quality construction materials, every secure financial future begins with the right building blocks. Affinity Credit Union provides those building blocks: essential banking products, wealth-building strategies, protective measures, and advanced financial services, all designed to work together seamlessly and all available to every member at competitive rates. From your first savings account to your retirement plan, from your first mortgage to your commercial loan, Affinity is with you at every stage of your financial construction. Visit Affinity Credit Union online or at any Saskatchewan branch to learn more about how their products can help you build the financial security you deserve.