

A PUBLICATION OF

Comfort life

THE TRUSTED SOURCE.



THE ULTIMATE RETIREMENT TOUR CHECKLIST AND GUIDE



THE ULTIMATE RETIREMENT TOUR CHECKLIST AND GUIDE

We recommend that you tour at least three different communities. Download separate copies of this guide for each community you tour.

Here’s what’s in the guide:

- What to look for on your tour**
This is the checklist of things to note regarding the building, the residents, the staff, and suites 3
- Questions for administrative staff**
What to ask about suites, services, amenities, dining, and all other facets of the community. 4
- Questions to ask about costs and fees**
These include expert tips that inform you about each issue, and note issues you might want to follow up on..... 8
- Expert insights on choosing**
Industry experts Canada-wide share what to look for, mistakes to avoid, red flags to steer clear of, and tips for a smooth transition..... 12

Residence Name _____

Residence Address: _____

Residence Contact Name: _____

Phone Number/Email: _____

EXPERT INSIGHTS ON CHOOSING

“When having the discussion [about care], begin with [the senior’s] daily routine and what makes them happy. If nature is important to them, does the retirement home offer an outdoor garden area or [places] where bird feeders and plants can be set up? Do they enjoy their daily walk to a coffee shop and want to be close to amenities like that? Do they enjoy baking and require [a place where they can] continue their passion? Having these wish-list items can make all the difference to how easily someone transitions to—and enjoys—life in their new residence.”

–AMANDA RICHARDS, SENIOR DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION, CHARTWELL RETIREMENT RESIDENCES

“Consider the culture of the retirement community. Typically, as we age we tend to revert to our comfort zones; such as our mother tongue, where we grew up; activities we loved when younger. It’s important to be comfortable with your surroundings. When choosing where to live, look for staff and a community that will understand and cater to your individual needs to enhance your residence experience.”

–REESA SOTO, MARKETING & SALES SPECIALIST, BAYCREST TERRACES

“Physical aspects like the building’s layout can also be important. Can you get around easily? Do you like the size of the community? Know the lifestyle you’re comfortable with. Do you prefer cruise-ship living, or something like a village?”

–PAT IRWIN, PRESIDENT, ELDERCARECANADA

“Do more than one visit. Multiple visits will really tell you if it’s comfortable. Know what you need [in terms of] privacy, independence, and freedom to make decisions. Talk to people in different daily settings, to get their view about what it’s like living there. Or walk around and ask yourself, ‘Is this a place [where] people feel like me? Do I have things in common with these people?’”

–AMY D’APRIX, GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORKER

“When you’re shopping for a house, you get a feeling when you walk in. You just know. It can be the same way with looking for a retirement home. Communities each have a culture and an energy, so when you walk in, pay attention to how you feel. Look at how residents look and feel and how staff interact with them. These are key things to watch and to get a feel for.”

–TALIA KHANANIA, OWNER, ELDER CARE TRANSITIONS INC.

“It’s easy to get distracted by bells and whistles. Keep your list of ‘must haves’ firmly in mind. If your parent really wants some outdoor gardening opportunities, don’t get distracted by the pool and spa if that’s not what they value.”

– HEATHER HILLIER-GREEN, PRESIDENT, GREENHOUSE MARKETING

ON MISTAKES TO AVOID

“We’ve witnessed moves that didn’t work out because of a rush in the search, led by an urgent need. Perhaps the senior was in the hospital and when they’re discharged, they can’t go home. They require care, and there’s an urgency to search for a place to go after the hospital. They move, not having had the time to learn more about all their options, the various communities, and what they each have to offer. Sometimes it’s not the right fit. They’re sometimes left at the beginning of their search all over again. It can also lead to cases where people declined unexpectedly or weren’t able to experience everything a retirement community has to offer.”

–TALIA KHANANIA, OWNER, ELDER CARE TRANSITIONS INC.

“When people tour a residence, what an adult child might find attractive—perhaps a brand-new residence—may not be what a senior parent is drawn to, for example, an established residence. It’s a big misstep to exclude the person who’ll be moving in from the beginning of the process. When families who are ‘just looking’ at options bring only top choices to their loved one for consideration, you risk excluding a residence that might appeal to them more and thus ease their transition.”

–AMANDA RICHARDS, SENIOR DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION, CHARTWELL RETIREMENT RESIDENCES

“Parents may wish to move near their adult children, but think twice before relocating from existing support systems such as their church, doctor, and old friends.”

–PAT IRWIN, PRESIDENT, ELDERCARECANADA

“Don’t feel like you’re the first person to go through this with your parents, even if that’s what it feels like to you. The difficult decision you’re making, any guilt or fear that you have are typical of other people out there who are helping parents find a retirement home.”

–SHARI CLANCY, MARKETING MANAGER, WILDPINE RESIDENCE

ON RED FLAGS

“Raise a red flag if residents seem unhappy or unwilling to talk or are unkempt, if food is limited on the menu or poorly prepared. Is the staff indifferent? Do furniture and fittings seem worn or shabby? Is the building in poor repair? Better look elsewhere.”

–PAT IRWIN, PRESIDENT, ELDERCARECANADA

“Be aware of how much you or your parents need [in terms of] privacy, independence, and freedom to make decisions about things. Some retirement homes are pretty [firm] in how they operate. I’d want to see what rules there are, and if the rules feel restrictive, that’s a red flag.”

–AMY D’APRIX, GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORKER

“Residents should be treated with absolute respect. If staff call them ‘love’ or ‘dear’ or share whispered confidences with you as you pass the resident, that’s the mark of a custodial atmosphere. None of us, regardless of age, wants to be patronized or spoken about to others.”

– HEATHER HILLIER-GREEN, PRESIDENT, GREENHOUSE MARKETING

“If you have all of these wonderful spaces inside the residence, like a greenhouse or a pool or other amenities like that, and no one’s using them, then that’s a red flag to me.”

–SHARI CLANCY, MARKETING MANAGER, WILDPINE RESIDENCE

“It’s important to know, at what point the retirement residence would ask someone or suggest that they need to find another place. They should acknowledge care limitations. A lot of them won’t be able to accommodate anyone who wanders. Some have limitations on behavioural issues. These things should be transparent. Families should be able to talk openly about them with the retirement home staff.”

–TALIA KHANANIA, OWNER, ELDER CARE TRANSITIONS INC.

ON MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION

“To help make the transition easier, observe closely how [your parent or loved one] lives, what their routine is day-to-day. Then as best as possible, replicate it. We all have important, small moments in [our] lives that matter [to us]. Respect people’s routines with things that make them feel comforted.”

–AMY D’APRIX, GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORKER

“Don’t be intimidated by the task of moving. Help is available! Hire professionals to plan your space, select your existing or new furniture, pack and move you, and set up the new suite.”

–PAT IRWIN, PRESIDENT, ELDERCARECANADA

“You’ll [benefit from] an experienced company who’s done it for years, has ironed out kinks on the logistical coordination side, and are able and prepared to provide expert advice on how to make the transition as smooth as possible. As opposed to advice on how it should be done, [they] know the most efficient, least stressful way of doing something. They’ll understand what you want, but they’ll also explain implications [and] problems with it and suggest a better way.”

–TALIA KHANANIA, OWNER, ELDER CARE TRANSITIONS INC.

“People have to judge how much their parents want to be engaged in [downsizing and moving], but recognize the grief of it. It’s important for people to hear their stories. Try not to say, ‘Just let it go,’ or ‘Oh, Mom, you’re not going to need that in your new place.’ Instead, say, ‘It’s hard to let that go, isn’t it? I get that it’s hard.’ This can make a big difference.”

–AMY D’APRIX, GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORKER



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Where to find help and support in Canada:
www.comfortlife.ca/senior-careadvisor

How to pay for senior care:
www.comfortlife.ca/p/finance

Planning and downsizing:
www.comfortlife.ca/ebooks/downsizing-advice

Additional eBooks:
www.comfortlife.ca/ebooks

