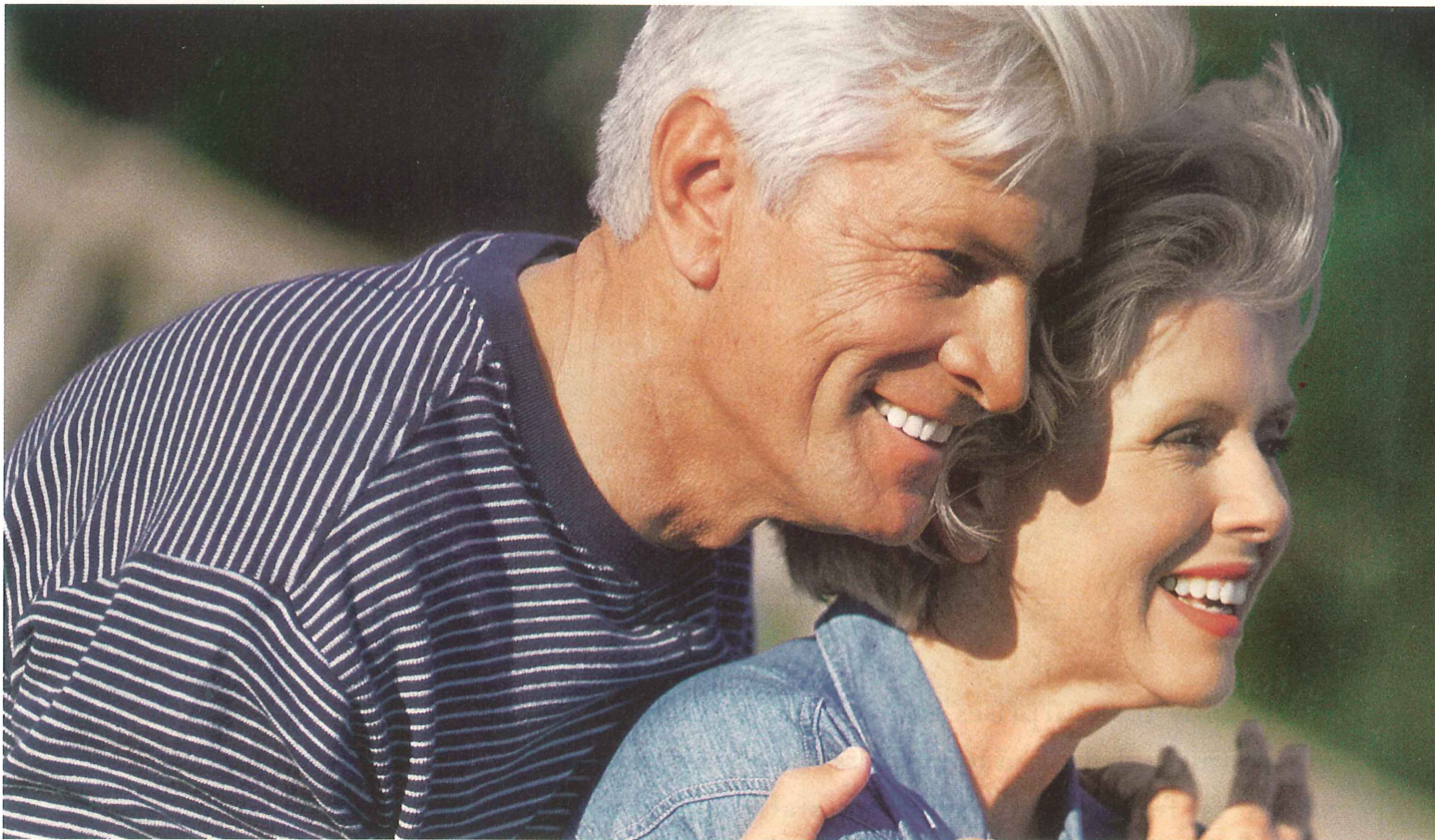


# Retiring IN STYLE

TODAY'S RETIREMENT  
COMMUNITIES OFFER  
AMPLE OPTIONS FOR  
ACTIVE SENIORS



**A**CCORDING TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY of Canada, in the coming decades, seniors will comprise a larger share of the Canadian population, growing from 3.5 million people in 1996 to an estimated 6.9 million by 2021. In addition, for most of their older years, the majority of those people are disability-free. As a result, more seniors than ever will be able to continue leading active lives and many will continue living in their own homes. Those who opt for alternative accommodations, perhaps in anticipation of their changing needs down the road, will find an ever-increasing range of housing options from which to choose. The trick is finding the one that best meets their needs.

"Today, the key message in the [retirement community] industry is a clear definition of different service providers for different resident needs," says Donna Rutten, executive director of the BC Retirement Communities Association (BCRCA), a group of owners and operators of retirement and assisted living communities pro-

viding choice in accommodation, hospitality and personal care services. Established with a mandate to change the way people view aging in our society, the BCRCA represents retirement communities that reflect the evolving needs and desires of seniors.

"For us, the biggest competition is people's own home or condo," admits Sam Zeitoun, general manager of The O'Keefe Retirement Community. Owned by Leisure Care Retirement Communities, the luxury Vancouver property is renowned for its elegant surroundings that promote wellness of the residents with the attention to detail generally limited to five-star resort accommodations. Niceties such as a move-in co-ordinator and a Lincoln Town Car with driver are some of the perks offered. Even the suites themselves are a cut above many others on the market.

"One of the big things that sets us apart is the fact that all apartments have full kitchens," says Zeitoun. "We do provide 20 meals, but having access to their own kitchen is another way to help people maintain their independence – it allows them to cook for >



themselves when they want, or to entertain friends. It's all part of the freedom of choice that we offer. In the dining room, [residents] can come any time. They don't need a reservation, unless they bring a guest. And they don't have to order a meal in advance. That keeps it more like a real restaurant."

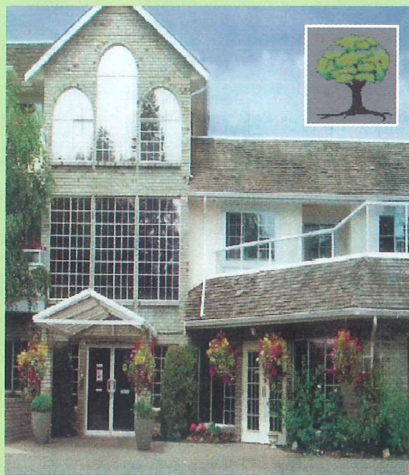
Access to options is a big part of the success of today's retirement accommodations. The realization that happy people tend to also be healthier is borne out in the move towards more flexible housing alternatives.

Susan Gerard, vice-president of marketing and communications for Amica Mature Lifestyles, says the modern active senior has influenced today's retirement accommodation inventory. "People don't want to live in a cookie-cutter environment when they're younger and that feeling doesn't change as they age," says Gerard, who points to the range of her own company's offerings as an example of diversity within the marketplace.

"Each Amica Wellness & Vitality Community has its own personality, even if the same amenities and services are found in more than one of our properties," says Gerard. The result, she says, is a place that feels like home. Amica at Arbutus Manor in Vancouver, Amica at Beechwood Village in Sidney, and Amica at Douglas House in Victoria are among the publicly traded (TSX:ACC) Canadian company's holdings.

With amenities like a fitness centre, pool, home theatre, and even a private pub, the word "community" is not misplaced. Amica's rental retirement communities are akin to a fine hotel, complete with spa, hair salon, Internet lounge, and in-suite cable. "All the amenities, even meals, are included in the rent, so residents know what their monthly expenses will be," says Gerard. Only in-suite phone service is extra. "That kind of detail helps those on fixed incomes better plan their finances, and that makes life as uncomplicated and pleasant as possible. The only other thing they have to budget for is personal expenses off premises," she adds. Amica also has privately owned condominium options for those preferring that alternative.

Choice is a big part of the operating philosophy at retirement communities run by Diversicare, too, which makes sense, given that diversity is part of the corporate name.



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Diversicare Canada Management Services would like to congratulate our western communities for being a part of the Diversicare family of residences that recently achieved the Order of Excellence award presented by the National Quality Institute of Canada.

*"I would like to thank all of our 3,500 current employees for their contribution to quality improvement, and our past employees who laid the foundations for our present success." Paul Richardson, President*



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"Often when people live in a community setting, they have to do things the same way as everyone else," says Elroy Jespersen, vice-president of Diversicare's western operations. "We do everything we can to help people remain independent – physically, mentally, spiritually – as long as possible." Often, that means going the extra mile to help those residing within the communities (Diversicare has three residences in the Lower Mainland, one in Kelowna and one in Penticton) maintain as much of their previous lifestyle as possible.

"The company constantly looks for ways to improve our service delivery systems as part of our Continuous Quality Improvement program," says Marge Kerr, regional manager for the region. Diversicare was awarded the National Quality Institute's gold award for excellence in service in 2001 and has now been named to the NQI Order of Excellence, one of only two companies in the country to achieve this highly coveted award, for demonstrating continuous improvements in many areas of its operations. Both Kerr and Jespersen agree that this recognition would

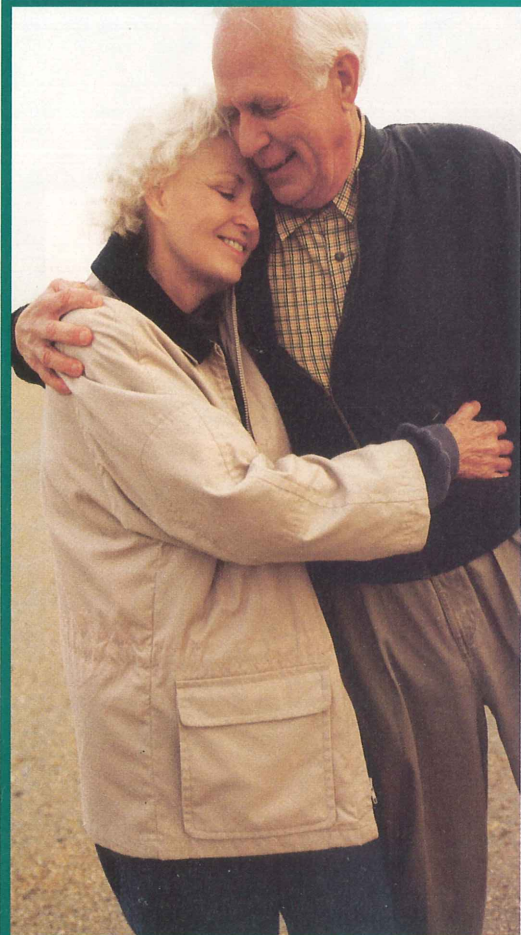


not have been possible without the contribution of the caring and committed employees who have a true passion for what they do.

Patricia Towne couldn't agree more. As vice-president of administration for Berwick Retirement Communities, she has seen the difference the people behind an operation can make. "Berwick is Vancouver Island owned and based," says Towne, noting the father and son team that owns the company is actively involved in all five Berwick locations (Victoria, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Comox, and Royal Oak), with the goal of creating places they would be "pleased to live in themselves." It's not surprising then, that the Berwick won the Crystal Award (first place) for construction

and development, which recognizes the architectural design and construction of all five properties.

Staff appear to be bolstered by the Berwick environment, too, given many have been with the company since its inception 17 years ago. That sort of loyalty is a reflection of the management style, which in turn says something about how residents are treated. The hometown touch seems to be paying off as the *Business Examiner* recently awarded them first place for construction and development, recognizing the architectural design and construction of all of their properties, as well as naming the company as a finalist in the category of Business of the Year



## Making Health & Happiness a Way of Life

*Each location boasts of being a unique community designed to encourage individuals with a sense of home, comfort, and community by providing compassionate, holistic support and service programs within different forms of accommodation. Our mission is to meet the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs of those entrusted in us, while reinforcing their ability to live life to the fullest.*

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(50-plus employees). More recently, the Victoria Chamber of Commerce also recognized Berwick as a finalist in the Business Leadership category.

Berwick Retirement Communities function with the understanding that as people age, they may require increased services, especially when health problems impair their independence. "Berwick Retirement Communities function to nurture independence, with the understanding that seniors are happiest and healthiest if they can remain in familiar surroundings when they need more support," says Towne, who points out that complex care (care for those with dementia or conditions requiring bed care) is not available at Berwick communities. Other facilities provide this sort of accommodation.

"Aging in place – remaining in one place for the rest of your life – is the key to our operations," says Diane Miller, administrator for HRC Care Society's Westminster House in south Surrey. The community is an example of those that do provide accommodation to seniors from all care levels. "Individuals can

come in at any level – independent, assisted living or complex care – and they don't have to move," notes Miller.

Facilities of this type offer residents an added bonus. "Moving is painful for the elderly," says Miller. "Leaving home means leaving so many memories. It often also means leaving family and friends, so it's nice when they can stay in one place as much as possible."

Westminster House, a Christian facility run by the Hope Reform Church, strives to emulate the home environment through comfortable accommodations, caring staff and a range of intergenerational activities involving local school children. The private, not-for-profit facility caters to the well-being of its residents on a holistic level, says Miller.

The retirement communities discussed above are only a small sampling of the accommodations available to seniors who by choice or circumstances are looking for alternatives to at-home living. The ever-growing field of options can make for some pretty weighty decisions when time comes to narrowing the

field of choices.

If there is one piece of advice that Rutten would like to stress to anyone in the market for a unit in a retirement community, it's this: "Better to make a move sooner rather than later, like waiting for a crisis," Rutten says. "Seniors living in retirement communities have a wonderful advantage over many who live alone. They have social and emotional support because they are part of a community."

To find out more about retirement community options in your area, check out the Seniors Housing Information Program website at [www.seniorshousing.bc.ca](http://www.seniorshousing.bc.ca). The BC Retirement Community Association also offers a number of helpful links. The BCRCA website can be found at [www.bcrca.com](http://www.bcrca.com) ■

*This promotional feature was prepared by BCBusiness magazine's Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Janet Collins. For information contact BCBusiness director of corporate features John Cochran at 604-299-7311. Email: [jcochrane@canadawide.com](mailto:jcochrane@canadawide.com)*



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