## Ready to downsize? Try an adult lifestyle community

Retirement communities offer activities, camaraderie in carefree environment

### MICHELLE WILLIAMS SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Ed and Catherine Cotton were living in a large bungalow on a big lot in Aurora, Ont.

"Our two sons moved away and I retired, so I no longer needed my home office," says Ed. "We had too much space and our property was too onerous for us to maintain — especially while our friends were out golfing."

They moved to Briar Hill, an adult lifestyle community on the outskirts of Alliston, Ont.

"It met our needs in so many ways," says Catherine. "The homes were beautiful, well built with lots of choice. Being on the golf course was a big plus for us. There's an amazing camaraderie among the residents. And there is just about every activity you can imagine."

Empty nesters and those nearly or recently retired are increasingly looking to Ontario's adult lifestyle communities as a place to resettle.

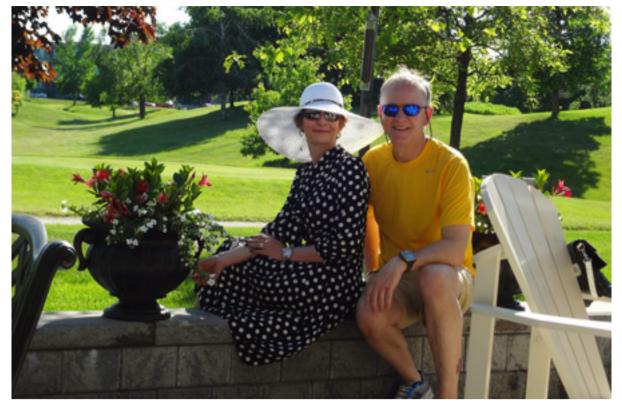
"We're not talking about traditional retirement homes that offer assisted living," says Angela Greenway, vice-president of real-estate marketing for adultlifestylecommunities.ca. "These communities are vibrant social hubs for 50+ adults, humming with activity and options to suit just about any taste or lifestyle."

When Terry and Karen Bergin were ready to leave their 3,000-square-foot home, they originally considered building a new property north of the city.

"But we happened upon Rosedale Village," says Terry, "and it was just what we were looking for."

They purchased a bungalow on a premium lot and fell in love with the Brampton development. "It has great fitness facilities, walking trails, a nice pool, a golf course and lots of other amenities. It's also the style of home we wanted within a gated community. The snow is shovelled, the gardens are tended and the neighbours are very friendly."

Laurie Scott chose Bluewater



Terry and Karen Bergin purchased a bungalow in Rosedale Village in Brampton. They fell in love with their premium lot and the facilities it offers.

Country, a development on the outskirts of Sarnia, Ont.

She left behind a big home with an in-ground pool to enjoy the maintenance-free living that the community affords.

"With my busy lifestyle, the amenities at Bluewater were attractive. The clubhouse has an indoor pool, fitness facility, great hall where dinner and dances are held on a regular basis, which attracts many community residents. All this is available right at my doorstep."

The communities' developers understand what their buyers are looking for.

"The ability to live a carefree lifestyle is what prompts older adults to make the move," says Domenic Zita, executive vice-president of the VAN-DYK group of companies, developer and builder of the Craftsman Condominium Residences in Clarkson Village in Mississauga.

The homes are built with the residents' needs in mind: full of multipurpose spaces.

"Having amenities within walking distance is important for this demographic," Zita says. "They're also looking for a wide range of activities specially selected to promote social engagement and encourage vibrant, active lifestyles."

Carolyne Blair and Tom Kirisit chose Dover Coast in Port Dover on Lake Erie. With loads of fitness and social amenities, there's always plenty to keep them engaged. But they were sold on the lakefront location.

"We love it here," says Blair. "I paint watercolours and it's a beautiful backdrop. We can swim from our community dock and there's a beach close by."

The convenience was equally important to them.

"We knew we didn't want to deal with the upkeep of a big house anymore," she says, "especially since we're in Florida for five months of the year. We never have to worry about just walking away and leaving behind the garden maintenance and snow shovelling."

## **BEHIND**Perhaps the most challenging part

> LEAVE THE BAGGAGE

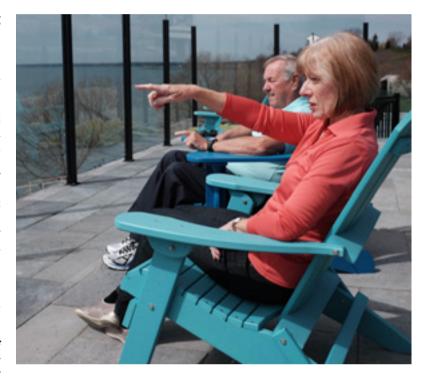
Perhaps the most challenging part of downsizing to a smaller home is letting go of years of accumulated stuff.

Domenic Zita of VANDYK recommends looking for a home with "spacious and functional floor plans that can accommodate your existing full-size furniture and family heirlooms."

However, most people who have made the move recommend that you purge your belongings before you pack up.

"Be prepared to let go and do some serious downsizing," says Terry Bergin, a resident with his wife, Karen, at Brampton's Rosedale Village. "Half the stuff you have will likely be irrelevant for this new stage of your life."

Bergin believes that bringing along all that baggage only weighs you down. "Remember, your life is changing — it's about to get a whole lot better."



Carolyne Blair and Tom Kirisit were enticed by the lakefront location of Dover Coast in Port Dover on Lake Erie.

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