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'Smart- Size' your golden years

How scaling down items in the home can help to free up emotional energy for other activities.

Vancouver Sun

Published: Wednesday, January 30, 2008

You've worked hard throughout your life, enjoyed a satisfying career, raised a beautiful family, and now you're ready to enjoy your retirement to its fullest. What's more, you've found the ideal retirement community that offers an active lifestyle and the comfort of knowing you can age-in-place. But, can you get through the challenge of what to take with you as you down-size to a smaller home?

"For many seniors looking to move to a retirement community, the thought of sorting through all their belongings can be overwhelming," says Elisa Prashad, Vice President of Origin Retirement Communities. "They fear having to give up too much in order to move into a smaller space, but the truth is, with organization, time and careful planning, you can make your new home work beautifully and still keep your most cherished items."

"If a move to a retirement community is being considered, while an actual living space may be smaller, the reality is that life is really lived outside your suite" states Prashad. "At Origin at Longwood opening next month in Nanaimo, expansive amenity areas can double or even triple a persons 'living space'.

Seniors who want to make the most of their retirement and enjoy the company of friends and family can enjoy an abundance of health, dining and recreational space and activities that lifestyle retirement communities can offer.

Industry experts have reported that strong demand will continue both in the new and existing home sectors. CMHC forecasts that across the province, home values will increase

16% over the 2006 to 2008 period. (SOURCE: CMHC HOUSING MARKET OUTLOOK, British Columbia Region Highlights, Fourth Quarter 2007)

What does that mean for seniors? Well with real estate prices so robust, the move to an all inclusive retirement community has never been more affordable as there is usually a home to sell. Seniors should not be afraid to consider this option, but just how much can you afford? You have many years to look forward to, but your income is going to be relatively fixed. A good financial plan can help you decide what you can afford, not just now, but in ten or twenty years from now as well.

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Before you move, here are a wide variety of 'Smart-sizing' tips and tricks to help ease the process of moving into a smaller home -

Prioritize. Write a list of your most valuable and high-quality items that you can't live without to identify what to keep and what to let go of.

Get a second opinion. Have someone else provide an objective opinion to help make the final decision on items you may or may not need.

Sell or donate. Work with auction houses, dealers and consignment shops to identify what can be sold, and donate other items to charities.

Speak with family. You may have items that are of value to your family that can be passed down to future generations.

Plan your space ahead of time. Use rooms of similar size in your existing home or a floorplan to visualize how your pieces will fit into your new space.

Find new uses for favoured items. For pieces you just can't part with, see if you can find a new or additional way to use it in your new home.

Give yourself lots of time! The more time you have to organize and edit before you move, the less overwhelming the process will be.

For more information about Origin at Longwood in Nanaimo, call 250-751-7755 or visit www.originway.ca

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