

## **When our homes don't work for us anymore**

By Clay Tippett – November 22, 20118

As we get on in years, downsizing can make a lot of sense.

For too many, dollars are the deciding factor. The expense of maintaining a home can be a financial burden. Sometimes it seems that the refrigerator, the hot water tank and the furnace are all conspiring together to need replacement at the same time, not to mention the roof. The cost of living increases in CPP and OAS don't seem to keep up with the real cost of living and the money that is tied up in one's house is needed just to get by.

We can lose a spouse or companion and find ourselves alone without family nearby. Downsizing and moving to be closer to our siblings or kids becomes the solution.

For the more fortunate, the choice to downsize comes from wanting change in lifestyle. We become empty nesters, yet spend time and money labouring to maintain a large home and yard, when what we really want is to travel more. One neighbour said "We can't keep up with the cobwebs." Moving to a condo apartment or townhouse and paying strata fees in exchange for freedom from yard-work and home maintenance - a "lock and leave" world - can seem like a great bargain.

Changing your accommodation becomes a necessity when your home becomes a danger to you. As birthdays click by at an ever faster rate, stairs are not your friend. Hallways and doorways may be too narrow to accommodate a walker or wheelchair. Without convenient grab rails falling can happen anytime. Options become particularly limited if the need for change is brought about by illness or accident.

These common life situations apply to people in locations both urban and rural, but in rural areas, things are made worse by the need to travel to the city for essential services. A trip to town, that at one time may have been a daily event, becomes a challenge if one either can't drive or is afraid to because of road conditions or wild game. To do basic things like grocery shopping or receiving medical care may mean relying on the kindness of others.

According to the 2016 census, 16.3% of Canadians are aged 65 or older. In the Tri-Village area, the number is almost double that at 31.5%. If you wonder how really grey-haired we are, adding in the folks in the 55-64 age range yields the astounding figure that 56.8% of us locally are aged 55 and older.

From the census, it would appear decisions about housing are going to be front and centre for many of us. In conversation, many people have expressed a desire to stay in the local area for as long as possible. Yet there's no housing in the Tri-Village area specifically designed to meet even the simpler needs of healthy seniors, much less those in need of nursing care. As a result, when a change in accommodation is necessary, the current options almost inevitably involve moving to a city.

A survey to try to determine the housing need of seniors living in the Tri-Village area is being jointly sponsored by the Wasa District Lions Club and the Tri-Village Buzz. It is hoped that the results can be used as a factual basis for discussion about increasing the options for staying in the local area as we age.

The survey will be distributed in early 2019 in paper form as well as online. More information will be the February and March editions of the Buzz.