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Where to look when you need a home

Directory of residences is good place to start

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Maybe you, or a parent, are facing a difficult choice from among all the seniors residences out there. Which one will suit? Where is it located? Can you afford it? But before all that, where do you start? What is available and how do you contact them? Looking in the telephone directory is likely to be tedious and error-prone. You can ask someone, but there's a possibility that you will never hear about a residence that suits perfectly.

A recently updated resource can help you make a start. It's a 200-page bilingual directory of some 200 residences for autonomous seniors in Montreal and the surrounding area, published by the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal.

The directory does not provide reviews. But each listing gives the basics: location, telephone number, number and type of units, services and charges. There is an index by area as well as an alphabetical one.

The non-profit centre's executive director, Lorraine Bilocq Lebeau, emphasizes that it does not have any business relations with the listed residences, which do not pay to be in the directory. Nor does it have any arrangements with the commercial placement agencies that specialize in the field.

The directory costs \$15 plus \$5 for handling and postage.

The centre also provides free access to information on a wide variety of community resources: health, welfare, financial help, employment, food resources. It is supported by a Quebec government grant and by Centraide. As well, the centre publishes: n Directory of Community Services of Greater Montreal.

n Directory of Food Resources for Low-Income People in Greater Montreal.

n Directory of Community Services for Homeless People in the Greater Montreal Area.

n Directory of Self-Help Groups in Greater Montreal.

Call **514-527-1375** to order, send email to crgm@info-reference.qc.ca.

or go to www.info-reference.qc.ca for more information.

Consulting Services that provide consulting assistance to find a suitable residence are available. An example is HelpingSeniors, which has been doing that kind of thing for eight years.

Founder Marie-Claude Giguère says she has visited close to 250 residences in and around Montreal to check them out. Giguère's operation is a business. She charges a consultation fee of \$150 upfront. In addition, she may get a commission from a residence for a successful referral. Clients matched with a residence that does not pay commission are

charged about an additional \$500 by Giguère.

For the fees, Giguère offers support and hand-holding all the way through what can be a traumatic experience. She says her service helps clients determine which retirement residence best suits their needs. Clients are accompanied during visits to residences. There is help in choosing which furniture and belongings to bring along. There is also what she calls a three-step followup program.

"When everyday tasks are becoming more difficult, we help you evaluate your needs and arrange referrals for such services as adapted medical equipment, housekeeping, gardening, snow removal, prepared meals, companion services and transportation, pet care or house-sitting," she explains.

To help with your research, a free booklet is available from HelpingSeniors. Distilled from Giguère's experiences, the booklet is called *The 65+ Key Questions You Must Ask When Looking for a Residence*.

"To get the most out of this booklet, we suggest that you do not plan to read through it all at once," she said.

"Rather, pause after each question, consider the issues it brings up, and then answer it ... While this booklet is written with seniors in mind, we realize that some readers may be children or grandchildren who want to help their elderly loved ones. We hope this booklet is of help to all, the young and the young at heart. It is our hope that you will benefit from our experiences and make the most of the next stage of your life." Call

514-748-7485 , send email to info@helpingseniors.ca or go to the website at www.helpingseniors.ca for more information or an appointment.

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