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FEATURED

## Matt Del Vecchio: Home care or a senior living community — what to choose?

By Matt Del Vecchio, The Suburban  
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“Aging in place” is a term gaining in popularity. Many people prefer to stay at home as long as they can while others choose to transition into a senior living community that best suits their needs. What factors need to be considered in making the decision between home care and an appropriate senior living community?

## Care and support

Can your family provide the necessary care and support for your loved one? Canada is woefully behind most developed countries ranking second to last in the 37 countries representing the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at 0.2 per cent of GDP being allocated to home care. Very often, the caregiver role is left to the spouse or adult children.

Caregiver stress is a growing issue as our healthcare system falls behind in its ability to support the rising care needs of seniors. Caregiving duties increase over time. Additional support is usually required through the CLSC (centre local de services communautaires) or private caregivers. The person receiving care will usually not realize the toll caregiving is taking on family members. Try to build up your resources and support network to age in place. At a certain point in time, families will need to decide if home care is no longer sustainable.

## Isolation and loneliness

We are seeing unprecedented levels of mental health issues and cognitive decline due to a lack of stimulation. Isolation and loneliness are at the core of these issues. The pandemic has only escalated the problem. Caregiver support at home can help. However, human interaction is typically limited to a minimal amount of people. If this is a concern, a senior living community may be a better option where physical and mental stimulation are in abundance when compared to a home environment.

## Senior living options

Should a decision be made to transition into a senior's residence, options are available in the public or private sector. It is important to know that public residences are limited to long-term care only (typically more than three hours of daily care) and must be accessed through your local CLSC. Waiting times will vary but will generally be between nine months to two years. Private senior living communities can also be an option, which range from independent living, assisted living, memory care, and long-term care. These are called Residences pour Aînés (RPA) or commonly referred to as a retirement home.



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## Best of both worlds

I am amazed at how many caregivers I see in RPAs. These caregivers can be from the CLSC or individuals that have been hired privately or through a home care agency. They can also be informal caregivers such as family and friends. It truly is the best of both worlds. Residents are benefitting from all the advantages of a senior living community while getting additional care support for their individual needs.

Being proactive through open communication and having essential conversations with family members regarding home care versus senior living will not only improve quality of life, but it will also prevent difficult decisions in a crisis situation.

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