



CASL

Chamber for the Advancement of Senior Living · Toronto & the GTA

Touring a Senior Home: Questions That Matter

Bring this checklist to every tour — and trust what you see, hear, and smell.

General guidance for Ontario families, prepared 2026. Programs, rules, and rates change — confirm current details with a qualified professional before acting.

Before you go

- Confirm what type of residence this is (independent living, assisted living, long-term care) and what happens if needs increase.
- Ask for all-in monthly pricing in writing — base rent, care fees, meals, and what costs extra.
- Check the latest inspection report (Ontario: Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority — rhra.ca).
- Book the tour close to a mealtime so you can see (and taste) the dining room in action.

During the tour — people

- Do staff greet residents by name? Do residents look comfortable, clean, and engaged?
- Ask: "What is your staff-to-resident ratio overnight?" — nights reveal the real staffing story.
- Ask how long the executive director and head of care have been in their roles.
- Talk to a resident or family member without staff present, if possible.

During the tour — the building

- Notice smells in hallways mid-afternoon — persistent odours often signal understaffing.
- Check bathrooms: grab bars, walk-in showers, emergency call buttons within reach of the floor.
- Look at the activity calendar on the wall. Are today's activities actually happening?
- Ask to see a typical suite, not just the model suite.

Money & contract

- What raises rent, how often, and by how much historically?
- What is the refund policy for the deposit, and what notice is needed to leave?
- What exactly triggers a move to a higher (more expensive) level of care, and who decides?
- Have a lawyer or trusted advisor read the agreement before signing — never sign on tour day.

CASL tip: tour at least three residences before deciding, and bring someone with you — a second set of eyes catches what emotion misses. A CASL consultation can shortlist residences that fit your budget and care needs before you tour a single one.