

Spots are going fast for Penticton's newest retirement home

JOE FRIES | Posted: Tuesday, February 24, 2015 5:57 pm

The doors were opened quietly at Penticton's newest retirement home on Jan. 15 and have barely been closed since.

"We've got a very nice problem here: We've had such a tremendous response that we thought we better make (the grand opening) kind of a low-key event so we could cope with all the people moving in," said Ed Hall, CEO of Regency Retirement Resorts.

The company has four other such facilities in the Kelowna area that typically welcomed one new resident per week upon opening, but at Southwood in Penticton, "we're moving in two or three people a day," he explained, making it the best launch yet for Regency.

"It's the most successful by a factor of two," Hall said.

As of last week, 80 per cent of the 77 available guest suites were spoken for, and initial interest was so strong the company has already begun work on a second wing of suites that will double capacity when it opens this summer and boost the staffing complement to 50.

Southwood offers independent living with services such as meals, laundry and cleaning, all in a setting that has the look and feel of a luxury resort.

Monthly rent on a one-bedroom, one-bathroom suite starts at \$1,995 and climbs to \$2,995 for a two-bedroom, two-bathroom unit with a patio.

Hall said the company wasn't sure if such an upscale offering would fly in a community the size of Penticton, but such fears were quickly dismissed.

"We kind of knew what was coming because of the reservations, but we almost couldn't believe it," he said.

Regency also wrangled a five-year break on property taxes from city council worth up to \$100,000



Moving in

Joan Lundstrom was the second person to move into the Southwood Retirement Resort in Penticton after a low-key grand opening on Jan. 15.

annually on the \$30-million project located at the south end of Penticton on Wilson Street.

Most of the new guests, he added, are seniors looking to move out of their homes and into a facility that takes care of most of their needs.

Such is the case for Joan Lundstrom, who is the second-longest tenured resident at Southwood following her move there on Jan. 16.

She lived in a home on Windsor Avenue for five years and began considering Southwood on the urging of a friend who lives at a Regency facility in Kelowna.

Lundstrom, who lived alone, had taken a few falls and wanted to be closer to people, so she made the move and hasn't looked back, but rather out her new windows at the mountains surrounding Penticton.

"Being able to sit here and let my thoughts go to the hills and nature is awesome," said Lundstrom, a former special-needs caregiver and travel agent.

"It's like a reward for the 75 years I put in."