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Columnists

Gord Harrison: Plug the leaks, fill the gaps – and save some energy

Posted By Gord Harrison

Pat and I had an energy audit done on our 70-year old house last week and it wasn't as scary a process as I had imagined.

A young man from The Energy Guy measured the size of our house, inspected our attic (and lived to tell the tale), looked at all our rattling windows and set up a fan in our front door to measure the strength of air currents in our drafty one-floor cottage.

That's when the fun began.

When I saw my wet underwear swinging back and forth on my basement clothesline I realized there were several big leaks through the walls that I hadn't noticed or sealed.

To the young man performing the audit I said, "I bet you don't see that everyday."

"Oh, I've seen worse," he said, handing me the bill for the service.

Though I knew the house would suck big time energy-efficiency-wise (oh, and it did) it was somehow a relief to hear other houses suck wind worse than mine.

Not that I want people to be wasting home heating fuel or have higher cooling costs or stare at flapping laundry and wonder what the heck is wrong with their world.

I just don't want to own the house with the worst overall efficiency score in history.

You might wonder, why would I invite someone into the house to tell me things I may already know and pay for the privilege?

Dozens of reasons really.

For starters, our house is being renovated as I speak (that sound outside my window is George drilling holes as he prepares to blow insulation into empty walls) so now is a good time to get professional advice about other updates that will reduce my heating bill, pay for themselves and save me money over time.

Also, according to a recent report presented to our city's environment and transportation committee by Jay Stanford, London's director of environmental programs and solid waste, homes that are more than 50-years-old like mine (people don't call my part of town Old South for nothing) could save an average of 38 per cent in household energy use if properly retrofitted.

Personally, I'd rather see savings go into my pocket than laundry swingin' in the basement any old day.

Other reasons to have the energy audit done – provincial and federal government rebates.

For example: If I double the amount of insulation in the attic I will receive a significant portion of the cost back in six to eight weeks.

The audit also allows me to claim a rebate for each of 21 windows that will be installed in the near future.

Paperwork?

None. (Thank you, Tom from Energyguy).

Though Pat and I are putting out a fair bit of money for the renovations and we likely won't see a full return on all the hard work and expense until we're a fair bit older and grayer and sell the house before moving to the south of France ("What's that, Pat? You, er . . . we have other plans?") it is very helpful to know that as we make an effort to turn our old home into a more energy-efficient model different levels of government are willing to act as partners.

And it's also nice to know I don't own the leakiest house in history.

Author's note: Renovating? Visit
www.energuide.london.ca/home_renovations_HomeEnergyCosts.htm

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