

Home Improvements that Cut your Hydro Bill

Some well-researched renos can save you money and reduce your carbon footprint

A few renovations in the warmer months can really help to slash your hydro bills, reduce your carbon footprint and boost the value of your home. Before you rush into renos, find out exactly where you will get the biggest return on each dollar spent by using our free [home energy savings calculator](#).

Improve Attic Insulation

Warm air rises and, if your attic insulation isn't up to scratch, you could be putting a strain on your HVAC system. According to Steve Maxwell at the [Toronto Star](#): "Even homes built to code just two years ago probably won't meet minimum levels required for new homes today. If there's loose, fluffy insulation in your attic it has a value of about R3 per inch. If it's blanket-like batts it's about R4 per inch. Either way, measure and calculate what you've got and you'll know what you need to add. If you don't have at least 16 inches of insulation in your attic you're letting money waft out of your home."

Find out more about where to insulate and what products are best for you [here](#) and learn the meaning of R-values [here](#).

Insulate Doors and Windows

[About a third](#) of your home's lost conditioned indoor air escapes through doors and windows. Start by inspecting the seals around these openings for cracks and replace where necessary. Seal cracks and holes with rope caulk (get a tutorial [here](#)). Install storm windows over single pane windows or consider an upgrade.

Install door sweeps at the bottom of doors and use draft snakes where you're not getting a good seal. (Find a tutorial to make your own [here](#).)

Mind those Gaps

Caulk any holes or openings that allow your conditioned indoor air to escape, especially around plumbing and electrical openings. [Other places to seal](#) include:

Ceiling pot light fixtures and electrical boxes.

Openings into the attic such as those used for plumbing, wiring and ducts.

Mail slots (install an outdoor mailbox).

Around your exhaust fans and electrical boxes on exterior walls.

Gaps between the walls and floors where they meet at the joint.

All your light switches should be insulated with an outlet plate seal. Get a tutorial on how to do this [here](#).

Up your Heating Game

Have your furnace serviced before the cooler weather sets in or do it yourself using the tips [here](#). Even if you don't service your furnace, just changing the filters according to manufacturer's instructions can save [5-15%](#) on your hydro bill.

[About 20-30% of conditioned air](#) is lost through leaking ductwork. Check your leakage rate with a duct leakage tester. Wrap leaks with foil tape, mastic or seal with caulk.

Use a programmable thermostat like [an EcoBee](#) to reduce your heating and cooling costs. This works for condos and homes. Get more information [here](#).

Before you turn on the AC, consider reaching for the ceiling fan instead. A standard high-efficiency AC uses about 3,500 watts of power while a room AC uses about 1,000 watts. But a ceiling fan on high uses [only around 50 watts](#). Save even more money when you utilize the [coupons from your local energy provider](#).

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