



# Some simple steps to energy efficiency

Tom Lebour

TREB PRESIDENT'S COLUMN AS IT APPEARS IN THE TORONTO STAR

February 26, 2010

When it comes to character, you just can't beat the charm of an older home. Newly constructed homes however, come with their own unique assets, one of the most noteworthy of which is energy efficiency.

From the roof to the foundation, a number of innovative building practices often go into constructing today's greenest homes.

Roof shingles for example, are now available in recycled materials. Environmentally friendly spray foam insulation, which can help prevent dampness, keep out pollutants and contribute to structural strength, is even partially made with recycled materials.

Roofs, walls and floors can be insulated as well with special structural panels that consist of two layers of board with insulating foam in between them. The forms that are used to mould a home's poured concrete foundation can now also be found with insulating ability, and barriers that prevent dampness from rising into the foundation can be used at this stage of construction as well. Even exterior cladding is now insulated to offer greater energy efficiency.

If you prefer an older home though, there are many simple ways to make it more energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Start with an Energy Star programmable thermostat that will save on heating and cooling costs when you're not home. You can take this approach a step further by investing in a new high efficiency furnace or air conditioner. Adding insulation to the attic of your home will offer reduced energy costs for years to come as well.

A tank-less water heater will also save on energy costs by providing only the amount of heated water that you need rather than maintaining it in a cylinder.

Even making minor changes can have an impact, like choosing energy efficient light bulbs - Compact

Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) are good and Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) are even better.

If you're planning to make cosmetic changes to your home you can do your part for the environment by choosing wood flooring, and even carpet, made with recycled content. Look for low VOC paints and stains as well, which reduce the number of unstable, carbon-containing compounds that enter the air and react with other elements.

In the bathroom, you can keep more money in your pocket by installing low-flow faucets, showerheads and toilets.

Replacing old windows with low-E argon-filled units that have the Energy Star symbol can make a dramatic difference to your home's energy efficiency as well.

Changing your old appliances with new Energy Star machines is also a great way to reduce energy consumption while enhancing the overall appeal of your home.

Beyond enjoying the aesthetics, cost savings and fulfillment associated with helping the environment, you can also consider getting an energy audit to take full advantage of a number of government rebates for energy-saving home improvements. Please visit [www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com](http://www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com) to learn more about them.

Regardless of the approach you choose, remember that nothing can substitute for good-old fashioned conservation. Remember that the energy you save today may well be the energy that is needed tomorrow.

Tom Lebour is President of the Toronto Real Estate Board, a professional association that represents 29,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area.

*Tom Lebour is President of the Toronto Real Estate Board, a professional association that represents 28,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area.*