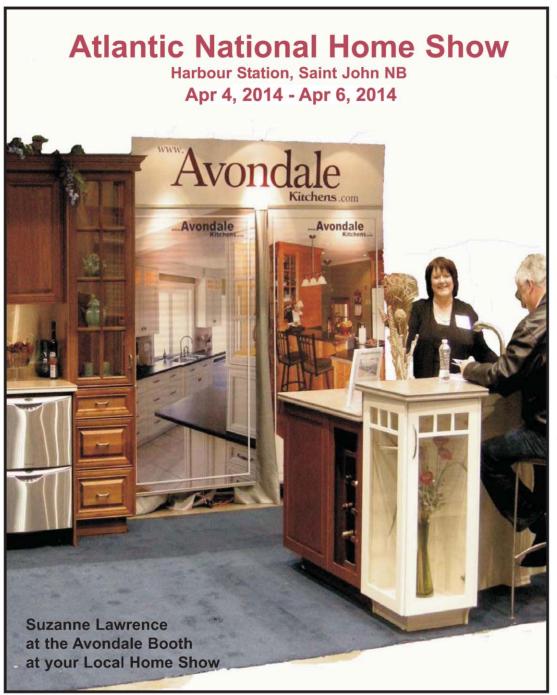


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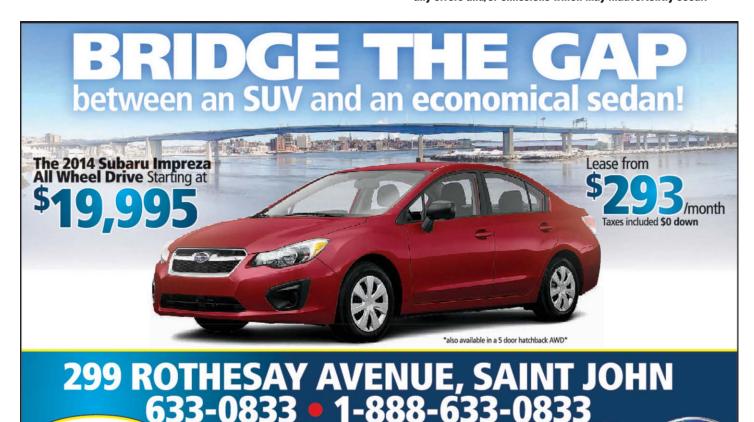
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Spotlight the floor in your décor

(NC) Think about the first thing you notice when stepping into a room. Do you glance at the floor like most of us? This would make the floor in any décor imperative to that first impression.

While keeping up with the trends can be expensive, there are new and emerging ideas that can help homeowners make meaningful changes without breaking the bank. Armed with ideas and the right tools, a newly painted floor could be the most affordable – and the easiest – décor update this spring.

One of the decorating trends emerging in 2014 is the pattern design. A number of companies have been developing durable and long lasting floor paints, including a new hybrid called "FloorGuard". Canadian manufacturer, Para Paints, tells us that it features the durability of an oil base, but gives you the easy, water cleanup of a latex paint.

"It is a premium quality, low VOC, high-gloss floor paint which is perfect for heavily trafficked areas," says Gary Belfall, senior brand manager and spokesperson for the company.

With the sophistication of these new floor paints, consumers are becoming more creative with their décor ideas, whether it's implementing the highly coveted chevron pattern made popular in fashion, or using over-sized stencils (which can be made from large pieces of cardboard) to create a custom look.

"Finding inspiration has never been easier thanks to social media," Belfall points out. "So as you begin, invest a little time in following the Pinterest boards of your favourite decorators and companies – including Para Paints,

which has some beautiful ideas for painting your way to a new look – from the floor up."

www.newscanada.com

Sidebar:

Tips For Perfectly Painted Wood Floors Take a look at this checklist,

courtesy of Para Paints:

Remove all carpet and nails.

Patch holes with wood filler and repair all broken/rotten areas.

Sand down the surface so it is ready to be primed.

To fully cover the wood knots, apply a coat of appropriate primer directly overtop so they won't bleed through the final layer of paint.

Once all of the knots are covered, lightly sand them and prime the entire surface.

Use a paint roller to cover large surfaces. Smaller paintbrushes can run the risk of the paint not applying evenly and it takes longer.

Make sure your floors are completely dry before removing painter's tape or stencils.

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Are you ready for an emergency?

(NC) Unexpected emergencies occur time and again in communities and cities across the country. These events have the potential to put you and your home at risk. There are ways, however, to reduce the risks from natural events, from technological or environmental accidents, and from human-caused incidents.

"Over the years, various emergency situations including hurricanes, flooding, blackouts, and accidents have impacted Canadians and the homes we own," says Steve Gray, a broker with Royal LePage Kelowna. "However, you can prepare and follow up after such emergencies in a variety of ways to reduce the impact on both you and your investment." Gray advises taking these steps:

Check your insurance. Adequate insurance coverage can help you replace what's lost, and cover your expenses if you are forced to leave your home during an emergency. Discuss your needs with an insurance representative.

Prepare your home emergency kit. Your emergency kit should include enough food, water and supplies to meet your needs for at least three days. In addition, it should include copies of important documents related to your home insurance, financial/banking information and medical prescriptions. Also be sure to include in your kit clothing and supplies required should you and your pets be evacuated from your home.

Following an emergency, check your home for damaged utilities. If you smell natural gas – which is odourless in its raw form, although a smell, like rotten eggs is added for your safety – vacate the premises and call your natural gas provider immediately. If you see damaged or frayed



electrical wires, or detect a water leak, contact your utility provider immediately. Turn off the main fuse box/breaker panel or water at the main valve where the water pipe enters your home.

Be sure to use home generators with caution and only outdoors in well-ventilated areas. Do not use charcoal or gas barbecues or camping equipment indoors.

While facing an emergency in your community comes with challenges, preparing for such an event can help you and your family to cope with the situation more effectively and to ward off potential additional setbacks. More information is available at www.royallepage.ca.

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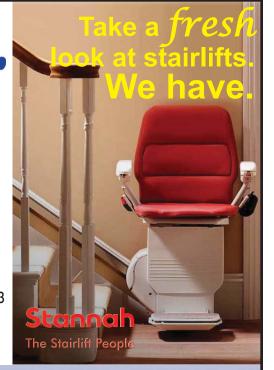


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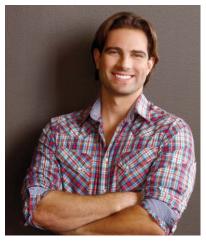
Transform your home into a peaceful sanctuary by Scott McGillivray

(NC) Everyday noise can wreak havoc on our inner peace. It can interrupt thoughts, our quiet conversations, and prevent us from truly relaxing. Furthermore, with televisions, home theatres, computers, video games, stereos and cell phones, our homes are also way too loud. So why not transform the house into a quiet retreat by soundproofing certain rooms? When renovating, install insulation that will accomplish this for you. Used in professional recording studios, stone-wool insulation is an excellent acoustic barrier that effectively absorbs sound. For home use, industry experts recommend a Roxul product called Safe n' Sound. It's an easy-to-install material designed for use inside walls, ceilings and floors. For the best soundproofing results, install the Safe n' Sound stone-wool material in your media room, washrooms, laundry room, and in your floor

joists. By soundproofing a room it means that the sound is confined to that particular space, leaving the rest of your home undisturbed and your life, uninterrupted.

Scott McGillivray is a full-time real estate investor, contractor, television host, writer, and educator.

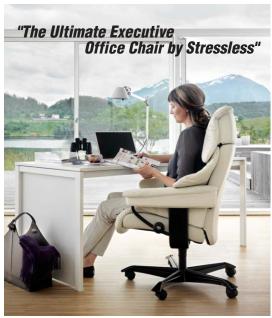
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Family owned and operated since 1981 by Eric and Kathy Hicks and now son Scott, Valley Ridge offers the Maritimes high quality home furnishings and accessories. In fact, the tag line to the logo is "The Maritime's Furniture Showplace".

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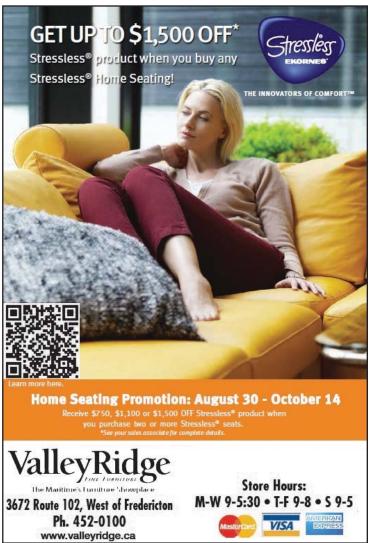
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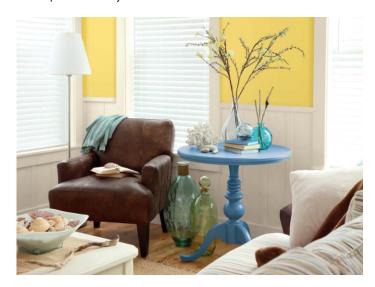


Spring Décor Trends: Bring the beach house home

(NC) Why wait any longer for the full colour of spring?

While the trees thaw and the sun is shining earlier in the mornings, most of us admit we are eager for more. So why not a fresh coat of paint inside your home? It might just be the quickest way of banishing the winter doldrums to give you a fresh start to spring.

Though do-it-yourself painting is one of the least expensive options to spruce up your home, choosing the right colour palette can be a daunting and nerve-wracking task. Not all homeowners have access to a professional designer's eye, so for ease with choosing colours, Para Paints has released what they call their Colour Trend Palette Postcards for 2014. This tool is formatted as a handy passport and all of the trends evoke a sense of escape from the icy cold winter.



One palette, or colour trend destination is called Beach House, which suggests leading with a cheerful and sunny yellow, like Para's chosen colour of the year, Plantain Chips (PF52), and matching it with grey neutrals. Adding accent colours of bright blues and greens provides the perfect complement to create an overall seaside inspired room.

Another tropical option can be found in Island Escape, a palette built around Tahitian Pearl (PF65), a dark and vivid South Sea teal. This colour made a strong showing last year and continues into 2014, especially when paired with bright berry shades and vibrant oranges, while offset with a neutral white.

These newest palettes provide the inspiration for refreshed and rejuvenated rooms without the guesswork of choosing complementary colours.

"It can be expensive to completely redo a room, so the trick is to find a starting point for a colour refresh in your existing décor scheme," says Garry Belfall, the senior brand manager at Para Paints. "The 2014 Colour Trend Palette Postcards are designed to help people see how vibrant colours and complementary neutrals can work together."

It can be as simple as switching out one or two of your colour choices from an accent wall, rug, or even couch cushions. It can make a world of a difference.

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Stephen Train owner and manager of port city pawn shop has been in business since 2003 located at 57 Ross Street, which is located along the lower cove loop off Charlotte street.

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Store hours are Monday to Friday 10am - 6pm. Visit our new website at www.portcitypawnshop.com



Choose Quality over Quantity to create the bathroom of your dreams

(NC) While your dream bath may be a sprawling space, the reality is that the typical bathroom is 100 square feet or less. But, a large bathroom footprint isn't always the answer to a better bath. Focusing on quality products can create a luxurious look, even in a small space.

Free-up Floor and Counter Space

You may not be able to create more space, but there are many ways to create the illusion of more space. Adding a pedestal sink or a furniture-style vanity with legs gives an increased line of sight, making the space appear larger. Similarly, clutter takes up valuable space. One way to free up extra room on the countertop is with a single-handle or wall-mount faucet. Doors can also make a room feel constrained. Rather than a traditional swing or hinged door, opt for pocket doors; which frees up approximately ten square feet of floor space.

Focus on Fabulous Fixtures

We all need storage in the bath, but don't limit yourself to the horizontal surfaces. Make the most of your vertical space by adding bath accessories, as well.

Adding a hotel shelf, which combines a towel bar with a shelf, offers an excellent storage spot for towels. A wall-mount hair dryer holder, a pivoting wall-mount makeup mirror, a curved shower rod and robe hooks are all excellent hotel-inspired accessory options.



Dominate with Dual-Function

Dual-function products are perfect for smaller baths because they offer added benefits without taking up more space. Update your current toilet paper holder, towel bar and in-shower shelves with newer versions that integrate a grab bar. Moen® Home Care® offers stylish grab bar designs featuring a paper holder, a towel bar and two shelf designs; all in a variety of finishes to help you update these bathroom basics while adding storage, safety and style.



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And, no matter how large or small your shower, there's always room to add seating, which increases safety and ease while shaving and washing. The fold-down teak seat from Moen Home Care is a great option since it features a unique wall-mount design that folds down for a comfortable and secure shower seat to avoid slips and falls. When not in use, it folds up to a thin, compact profile.

It's All Smoke (and Light) and Mirrors

There are more benefits to mirrors in a bathroom other than a place to check your hair and makeup. They can actually make a room appear twice as large as the actual size. In addition to your vanity mirror,

consider hanging a full-length mirror on a door. Similarly, bringing in more light will open up the space and make your bathroom come to life. A skylight is a unique addition, since it utilizes the often unused ceiling space. Lighting fixtures are also an ideal way to brighten the space, but don't settle for boring basics. Try more stylish options, like sconces, which can add a more designer, upscale feel. Moen offers a variety of lighting fixtures available in one-, two-, three- and four-light configurations to fit your space constraints and will perfectly match your faucets and accessories in style and finish.

Remember to shop for quality over quantity when updating your bath, and soon you'll enjoy the serenity of a stylish and organized space.

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Choosing the ideal spa & hot tub

(NC) Every year, more people are turning to spas and hot tubs as a way to relax, unwind and relieve their aches and pains. One of the reasons they are so popular is that they can be enjoyed year round - indoors or outdoors - allowing you to make the most of your leisure time regardless of the

Spas and hot tubs are available in preformed acrylic or thermoplastic spa shell designs that are lowered into the deck for a permanent installation



or as portable models in a spa skirt or cabinet that can be moved to a new location if your move.

Permanent concrete inground spas are also popular either on their own or installed as part of a pool installation. The advantage of a

concrete spa is its versatility. It can be custom-designed into virtually any size or shape and can be finished in mosaic tile, block glass or colourful

For those who want a hot tub for an aquatic workout – nothing can beat a



swim spa. These rectangular-shaped units are equipped with powerful jets, propellers or paddle wheels that create a counter-current for swim-in-place exercising. Some swim spas also include bungee-cord and paddle-type devices for rowing exercises that improve muscle strength in the arms, as well as a warm water spa area where bathers can sit down and relax after a strenuous workout. A swim spa can be installed inground, flush with the deck, or as a portable, above-ground unit.

Soft-sided spas are another option. These lightweight, circular-shaped models are made of dense foam and are small enough to take with you for a weekend at the cottage - just empty them and roll them through the door and into a van or truck for the ultimate in portability.

For traditionalists, a wooden hot tub is the preferred choice. Made from cedar staves held together with metal hoops, circular-shaped wooden hot tubs offer a deep soak and are the perfect complement to wooden decks and patio furniture.

For more information on what is available in hot tubs and spas, contact the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada at 1-800-879-7066 or visit their Web site at www.poolcouncil.ca.

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Center on the Model Farm Road in Quispamsis has one of the largest displays of trees, shrubs, and perennials in the area, and is a popular family destination. There are a dozen kinds of farm animals in the "CORRAL' for kids to feed, and a nature trail right behind it. The open season runs April thru October, 7 days a week. Duncan gives several free lectures each spring and fall, and has family events with tractor rides, scavenger hunts, and barbeques. Look for details on those events on the website www.brunswicknurseries.com .



Insurance tips for condo landlords

(NC) Owning a rental condominium is a great investment opportunity, but it comes with a unique set of responsibilities. Condos make landlords vulnerable because of the various parties involved, including tenants, condominium boards and commercial organizations, as well as the nuances of rental legislation. To protect yourself against costly repairs and other major headaches, take the following steps:

Understand the insurance landscape. The relationship between you, your tenant, and the building itself (which is subject to a commercial policy)

can complicate matters, especially in regard to insurance. While policies sometimes overlap, certain things inevitably slip through the cracks and could become contentious. Start by consulting a trusted insurance advisor to identify any possible issues or oversights. Supplement your basic landlord coverage. "Most traditional policies do not include 'white goods' or, in other words, appliances. So, if something goes wrong with your tenant's stove or fridge, you could be held financially responsible. Avoid this by adding those items to your exist-



ing landlord policy," says Blake Reichert, regional vice president at Western Financial Group. We all hope that tenants will be responsible, but you need to plan for any eventuality. "You should also determine whether or not upgrades to your unit are covered by your existing policy," adds Reichert. "Many owners will improve their space without supplementing their coverage. An insurance broker can advise you on the best way to proceed when you make changes, no matter how small."

Ensure that your tenant has an individual policy. Before entering a new rental agreement, ask for a copy of your tenant's individual policy and share it with your insurance broker. That way you can find any gaps in coverage. Also, since these policies must be regularly renewed, build a stipulation into the lease that allows you to check it on an annual basis. As with your insurance, tenant policies can either be quite comprehensive or very specific, often encompassing their property and nothing further. It is a good idea to be clear on where your insurance ends and the tenant's begins.

Remember to talk to a professional insurance advisor and, first and foremost, be selective about who you rent to.

More information is available at www.westernfinancialgroup.ca. www.newscanada.com

Expand downstairs to maximize space and energy efficiency

(NC) With house prices on the rise, finishing a basement is the latest trend in the real estate market. More and more homeowners are enjoying the perks of additional living space, a reduction in heating and cooling costs, a healthier home – and if done right, a more desirable home when selling. A finished basement can be used for virtually anything and may offer multipurpose spaces the entire family can enjoy. Common uses include additional storage, media room, craft room, guest suite, workshop, or gym. A little extra room can give a growing family space to breathe and provide convenience for everyday life.



An unfinished basement can be a source of energy loss. By finishing your basement, you can expect to see savings on your heating and cooling costs. Industry experts recommend finishing the space with the proper framing, insulation and vapour barrier to guarantee a cozy and inviting space. Insulation plays a key role in the comfort of your newly renovated space and although hidden within your walls, it will make sure your space stays cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Retailers suggest using a stone wool insulation, such as Roxul. This recommendation is also fire resistant, water repellent, and is resistant to mold, mildew, rote and bacterial growth – making your space healthy and safe.

An added benefit to expanding downstairs with a finished basement is the instant marketability. Many buyers now demand a well-finished basement to give them extra space. Although you may not immediately recoup the financial costs prior to selling, you will stand out among the rest. www.newscanada.com







How to cut costs on your home improvement project

Over the last several decades, more and more homeowners have embraced the notion that homes need not all be alike, and that an individual's home can cater to his or her personal tastes and needs. The trend of modeling a home after one's own tastes has extended beyond choosing furniture or other replaceable elements to structural changes and full-scale renovations, thus upping the financial ante for homeowners who want to turn their homes into places more in tune with their own personalities.

When it comes to improving their homes, many homeowners associate cutting costs with cutting corners, which can put residents' safety at risk. But there are ways for homeowners to save money on home improvement projects while still ensuring their homes are safe and sound.

- Work with recycled materials. Homeowners about to undertake small-scale do-it-yourself projects can often save money by using recycled materials. Many homeowners do not go the DIY route when making larger renovations, but those that do also can save money by using recycled materials. However, homeowners should know that many contractors do not work with recycled materials in an effort to avoid liability should something go awry during the project or after it is completed. But DIYers can benefit from using recycled materials, which can be purchased at various locations. For example, Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization devoted to building homes for the less fortunate, operates its own ReStores, which are nonprofit home improvement stores that sell recycled building materials at a steep discount. ReStore locations can be found by visiting www.habitat.org.
- Get your hands dirty. Labor costs on home improvement projects are considerable, but homeowners can cut these costs by doing some of the labor themselves. Even those men and women with little or no DIY experience can still chip in and save some money. Homeowners about to embark on a rebuilding project can chip in and do some of the demolition on their own. For example, when replacing sidewalks, homeowners can simply break up and remove the existing sidewalk on their own rather than paying their contractors to do such work for them. It's best for homeowners to leave interior labor to the professionals, as they are more knowledgeable about how to find load-bearing walls and plumbing fixtures than the average weekend warrior homeowner. Homeowners who mistakenly take out fixtures inside their homes in an attempt to cut down on labor costs might find such miscues are far more costly than simply paying for the labor from the get-go.
- Remember how flattering imitation can be. As the old adage goes, Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." Homeowners working on tight



budgets can opt for imitation materials that appear and feel just like more costly authentic materials. When opting for imitation materials, homeowners should know that they or their representatives cannot falsely represent the materials as authentic when selling the home, no matter how much materials look and feel like the real thing.

- Schedule projects during the off season. Like many professionals, contractors have busy seasons and seasons that tend to be slow. These seasons can change depending on geography, but homeowners can save money by postponing projects until the slow season, when contractors are more likely to offer discounts in an attempt to stay busy and continue to generate income. Savings will vary depending on a variety of factors, but it's not unlikely that patient homeowners willing to wait until the off season to renovate their homes can save as much as 5 percent on the overall cost of the project.
- Try not to customize. Though the driving force behind many home improvement projects is to create a dream home that caters to homeowners' individual needs, going overboard with customizing is expensive. Larger-than-normal dimensions may seem like a great idea, but unless they're absolutely necessary, they're best avoided by budget-conscious homeowners. Building supplies are sold at certain dimensions because those dimensions are the most common. Altering these dimensions unnecessarily is only driving up the cost of the project, so it's best to stick with stock sizes when money is tight.

Home improvement projects are often expensive undertakings. But such endeavors need not break the bank. SH142931



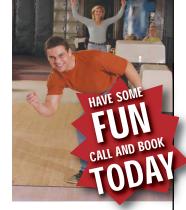
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WHERE DOES YOUR WATER FLOW?

Whether one believes that global warming is creating warmer temperatures in our region or not, one thing is true for sure: when we do have weather events they are far more severe than in the recent past. Ice storms, hurricanes, and rain storms mimicking monsoons all have had an impact on us in one manner or another recently. When it comes to your property, one of the most damaging forces is water; be it in the form of a flood, or more commonly, lack of sufficient drainage away from your house foundation and off your property. Have a look around your property to identify areas where water is not draining sufficiently and is taking an extraordinary amount of time to dry up. There are measures that can be taken with the help of a professional landscape crew to reduce or eliminate the amount of stagnant water on your property. Methods of water drainage might include a dry creek bed which is attractive in the middle of summer when it is dry, but is very functional when a large flow of water appears with rainstorms. If the flow of water is not as heavy, but direction needs to be given to the water so it does not flow in unwanted areas of the yard, a swale can be constructed. The swale is a shallow, contoured ditch-like area that directs the water on a specific course, usually as part of the lawn. French drains can also be constructed for areas that require drainage of a reasonably heavy flow of

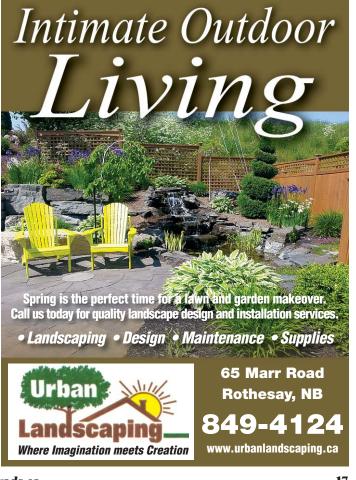
water, but which are in the

parameters of a lawn and need to be easily be maintained. Around the foundation of a house or other structure, a "drip edge" consisting of drainage stone can be helpful in allowing water to drain easily down into the subsurface layers of subsoil and gravel and down into the water table rather that sitting close to your foundation wall. Coincidentally, a drip edge can also be an attractive way to deal with areas that are particularly dry and do not promote good plant growth or grass growth next to a foundation.

Make a note in the coming months of what areas in your yard appear to hold water for longer than one day. Have a look at the grade of your property as it relates to your house. Does the land flow toward your house, or away? Don't assume there is nothing you can do to prevent water damaging your biggest investment. Talk to a certified, professional landscaper about what options you have to protect your home and keep your property looking beautiful and free of water damage.

Lorna Pond, CLP Urban Landscaping Ltd.







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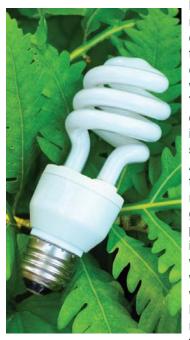




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Home lighting makes a big change this year

(NC) Great lighting in your home is not just practical. It's also a way to embellish your décor and showcase your colour scheme. From the entryway to the kitchen, lighting helps guests feel welcome and creates ambiance while providing adequate illumination. Choosing the right lighting, however, isn't always easy.



Lighting has evolved significantly in recent years with the introduction of energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, low-voltage light-emitting diodes (LEDs), and even with Edison-inspired design bulbs. These new methods shed light onto a whole new world of possibilities for energy conservation and style in your home.

At the beginning of 2014, the federal government, in its efforts to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, began phasing out the production of incandescent light bulbs, starting with those delivering 75- and 100-watts. The 40- and 60-watt bulbs will be phased out starting next December, so now would be the right time to think about new lights for your home.

To get us started, the lighting experts at Rona offer their insights and tips on the best ways to use energy efficient bulbs:

Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) use as little as 25% of the energy consumed by regular incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. Replace incandescent bulbs in the most commonly used areas of your home, such as the kitchen or living room. A CFL can save you more than five times its purchase price in electricity costs over its lifetime.

Light emitting diodes (LEDs) use as little as 15% of the energy of traditional bulbs and produce no heat. Use these bulbs in places where heat could be a problem or fire hazard, such as in shade lamps.

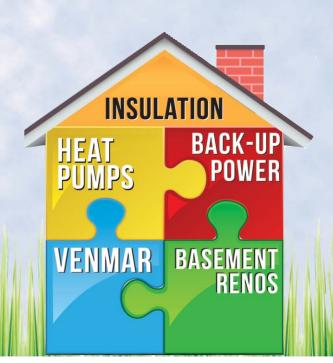
Halogen lights are an incandescent light that uses halogen gas, which increases its longevity and allows it to operate at a higher temperature. Because of their small size, halogens can be used in fixtures such as pot lights and desk lamps. www.newscanada.com

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Inspect your home for damage

(NC) Annual spring cleaning is routine throughout the house – and now with the frequency of weather extremes, we are also advised to inspect for damage.

Weight from heavy snow and ice, for example, can have an effect on the slope of your yard or the effectiveness of your outdoor pipes and drains. "Many of us are thankful when spring weather finally arrives, but we shouldn't forget that winter wear-and-tear might only become evident once the ice has melted," says Ryan Michel, spokesperson for Allstate Insurance Company of Canada. "We recommend that homeowners check the outside of their homes in early spring for any issues in the making."

Michel offers these tips for conducting an outdoor assessment of your home:

• Check your roof, chimney, foundation, skylights and vents for cracks that

could cause leaks and other issues.

- Inspect your gutters, which may have cracked in the cold weather or become clogged with debris.
- Make sure your downspouts are directing water away from the foundation of your home.
- Take an inventory of pipes in crawl spaces that could freeze and burst next winter if left



without insulation.

"It's important to maintain the condition of your home," says Michel. "Your annual spring clean is the perfect time to identify and make smaller repairs before any issue becomes a major concern."

If you find that your home has been damaged, be sure to contact your insurance agent as you begin the process of making repairs.

More information can be found at www.allstate.ca/learningcentre.

www.newscanada.com



Lighting sets the stage for outdoor fun

T'is the season for making changes in and around the home. The arrival of warmer weather renews homeowners' vigor for various home improvement projects, and many have grand plans for interior and exterior renovations as they prep their living spaces for comfort, beauty and entertaining opportunities. While there are many worthy projects to pursue, adding outdoor lighting to a home can help increase its value and make the home safer and more attractive in the evening hours.

According to the American Lighting Association, with a few updates to outside lighting, families can make even better use of their homes at night. Adding outdoor lighting is easier and less expensive than many homeowners may know, allowing them to transform an existing patio, deck or pool area into an enjoyable nighttime retreat. Pool parties, dinners on the patio or barbecues with neighbors become even more memorable when outdoor lighting is added or improved. But homeowners who want to install or upgrade their outdoor lighting should consider the following tips, courtesy of ALA.

- Improve navigation. Lighting is typically layered into a room or outdoor space in three ways: overhead, task and ambient. Even outdoors, where there are no typical boundaries and borders, those three layers are necessary. Outdoor overhead lighting should improve visibility on steps, paths and walking surfaces, especially where there's a bend or an intersection. Task lighting can be used around cooking or gardening areas. Ambient light will cast a comforting glow around any outdoor space.
- Enhance security. To improve visibility and security, combine a motion detector with a sconce to illuminate dark corners or entryways. Be sure to aim lights away from the door to improve visibility. Lanterns on either side of the door can give a home a warm, welcoming appearance and improve the safety of entryways.
- Create outdoor rooms. Outdoor lighting at the borders of a space is a
 great way to create barriers, both vertically and horizontally. Lights in a
 tree create something akin to a chandelier hung in the middle of the sky,
 and even accent lights in the general area of the edge of a patio, deck or
 porch will shine across the space and provide enough of a comfort level
 for people to understand where things are.



- Reduce glare. Outdoor lighting that casts a glare can be blinding, as can light that's too bright. Lighting along paths should be cast downward, with fixtures that are hooded. A variety of lighting options will create layers, allowing you to add or subtract as necessary. Exterior-safe dimmers also can provide flexible control over the level of light, as can movable fixtures added to a patio or porch.
- Add decorative elements. Just as arbors, pergolas, patios and other
 outdoor elements help to enhance the style of an outdoor space, so, too,
 can lighting contribute to a well-designed landscape. Lighting should play
 up decorative features of a yard and add the ambience that homeowners
 desire. Step lights make passage safe while also highlighting molding or
 trim details. An outdoor chandelier can make for a wonderful accent during
 dinnertime on the deck or under a pergola. Patio lights provide atmosphere
 as well as illumination for cooking outside.
- Enhance views from inside. Outdoor lighting can make the view from inside pleasant and enjoyable. Use a variety of lights, including spotlights on trees, lights dotted along pathways and accent lights on unique landscape features, to create an idyllic landscape visible from inside the home.

Outdoor lighting enhances functionality of yards and landscapes while making such areas safer for homeowners and their guests once the sun has gone down. SH142911





How to refresh your home quickly this spring

(NC) This spring, channel all the new-found positive energy into your home, as well as into yourself. Designer Sally Morse, the director of creative services for window fashions company, Hunter Douglas, gives us her favourite four tips – and some of them will surely strike home:

1. Declutter and Organize

Kids' toys collecting dust? Overflowing closets? Take spring cleaning to the next level and organize your home now so you can spend the upcoming summer months outdoors where you really want to be.

Inject the tranquility of the spring season into your life by making your home not only more beautiful, but more organized as well. Remember the old adage: A place for everything and everything in its place.

Next, don't let closet clutter intimidate you. Set aside a few hours when you won't feel rushed and take everything out, filling large, labeled trash bags with items destined for the dumpster – anything stained or beyond repair – and those that you want to give to charity and friends. Put foldables in bureaus and armoires. Treat yourself to padded hangers and suddenly, getting dressed is a pleasure, a chore no more.

What is the best complement for a to-die-for closet? An equally chic bedroom. Consider Alustra Duette Architella shades in a subtle metallic sheen fabric, trés moderne, or perhaps something romantic and delicate like Luminette Privacy Sheers, which feature a sheer face fabric with rotating fabric vanes behind. Both come in room-darkening options.

2. Save Energy and Money

Spring weather can be fickle. March is supposed to go in like a lion and out like a lamb, but everyone knows Mother Nature has a mind of her own. The ups and downs of spring can take a toll on electric bills, so this year, make a change.

The new Duette Architella Trielle honeycomb shade is a great energy-saving investment. With five insulating air pockets, it can help reduce heat loss through the window by up to 45 percent and solar heat gain by up to 80 percent.

You can also see if any of your light fixtures can use LED bulbs; they're ingenious and many are equipped with automatic turn-off, an easy energy-saver.

3. Easily Embrace the Sun

Some of the best things about spring are the sunny days we've been missing all winter long. No more waking up in darkness each morning – and this spring make it a point to truly rise and shine. You can do it with digital technology. Did you know that the Hunter Douglas Platinum App is the first shade-control, mobile app? And it is available as a free download with no service fees. With a quick tap on the screen, you can set your window coverings to raise or lower at pre-set times. Imagine waking up with ideal sunlight without having to leave the comfort of your bed – a perfect way to start the day.

4. Put a spring in Your Step

Take a cue from this cute saying and apply it to your home in creative, fun ways. Be they small – new bed and bath linens or painting the front door a cheery colour, or more lofty projects such as installing new carpet or redecorating an entire room – you deserve them.

One quick way to enhance the appearance of any room, no matter the décor, is with window dressings, and there are a vast number from which to choose.

More information, including the window fashions mentioned above, is available online at www.hunterdouglas.ca. www.newscanada.com





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Easy green upgrades can increase the property value

(NC) With the big push for environmental and energy conservation, homeowners are being presented with a wide range of options and initiatives for greener living. Not only do these solutions help save the planet, but they also help us save money.

The most valuable 'green home' improvements are able to facilitate reduced utility bills, as well as provide year round comfort to occupants. Your home's envelope, or the exterior-facing surfaces of the building, is typically regarded as the weakest link since it is constantly exposed to the elements like battling back the cold, reflecting the sun, guarding against rain, and pushing back the wind. It's important that your house can accomplish all these tasks (and more) without turning up the thermostat and without the need to constantly repair lost shingles, loose boards and damaged siding. Reinforcing from the inside can have a strong positive impact on how green and earth-friendly a home can become.

One area of the building envelope that can be boosted is the insulation. While traditional insulation materials provide thermal comfort, they fall behind on air-sealing and on their ability to create a greener home. Spray foam insulation is an

advanced alternative that can eliminate heating and cooling problems while reducing a reliance on energy consumption. Leading brand, Icynene, explains how this is achieved:

Sprayed as a liquid, spray foam insulation expands to fill all the spaces inside a wall cavity providing a total seal of all surfaces and reinforcing the integrity of the building. This modern alternative creates a barrier that leads to significant savings over the long term - both in terms of energy consumption and HVAC bills. Spray foam insulation has been known to provide homeowners as much as a 50 percent saving on their monthly heating and cooling bills due to its ability to air-seal and insulate in one step.

With this kind of green living, homeowners are doing their part in creating a greener planet and reducing their carbon footprint. More information can be found at www.icynene.com.

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Itchin' to update your kitchen

(NC) Remodeling the kitchen. When you decide to tackle this daunting undertaking, you want to do it right. And, you're not alone. According to a recent survey by Houzz.com, 49 percent of homeowners plan to completely gut their existing kitchen and start with a clean state. Regardless of the scope of your project, if you're itchin' to update your kitchen, follow these five steps to design the space you've been dreaming about.

Step 1: Create a budget

Before picking up a single tool or seeking contractor recommendations from friends, it's important to determine how much you're willing to spend to achieve your ideal kitchen. Whether needing basic upgrades or a complete remodel, setting your budget will help to create a realistic plan from the start. There are a wide range of impactful updates to change the look of your space no matter what the price tag.

Step 2: Think about what you need (and what you want)

Take a step back and think about how you use the kitchen. Are you an avid baker and need more counter space for rolling out confections? Do you like to make homemade pizza, and the thought of a stone oven makes you drool? No matter what your dream space looks like, there's one area that everyone should update – the kitchen faucet.

Because it sees so much use on a daily basis, think about ways to make tasks easier, like installing a new pulldown faucet. From preparing meals and washing dishes, to watering plants and filling pitchers, you'll quickly notice the difference made by this simple update. For a contemporary look, try the new Moen Align or ST pulldown faucets. Both bring modern style and superior performance with a two-function pulldown spray wand that allows you to switch the water flow from aerated stream to spray with the

push of a button.

Step 3: Research and plan

Sources for ideas and inspiration are infinite – especially online. Sites like Pinterest and Houzz provide endless eye candy and design concepts for your new kitchen space; Houzz can even provide recommendations of local professionals to contact. To visualize a few of the upgrades you're considering – not to mention touch and feel them – visit a local kitchen showroom as they have a number of vignettes and "rooms" designed throughout. Magazine articles can also provide valuable how-to information and design advice. Just be sure to save any favourite ideas in one place, making everything easily accessible when it's time to get started.

Step 4: Determine your approach

Will you hire a pro or do most of the work yourself? If you're going to change the layout or remove walls in the kitchen, it's best to work with a professional contractor. Rewiring electrical or adding new light sources are also jobs best left to a certified electrician. You can find a number of professionals online, where you can also read reviews from previous customers, and in some cases, view samples of their work. If you're an avid DIYer, you may feel comfortable installing new cabinets, flooring and countertops. But there are certain projects, like the demo, painting and installation of a new faucet that anyone – and any skill level – can easily tackle.

Step 5: Get to work

If you haven't begun working on your kitchen project yet, you're not alone; 68 percent of Houzz respondents haven't started construction, either. But with the perfect plan and a list of updates to incorporate, it will be simple to create your dream kitchen space. www.newscanada.com



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a floor leaves dirty detergent residue in the grout lines. Our extraction cleaning system incorporates cleaning agents, vacuum and a high pressure rinse to remove the dirt that homeowners can't.

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cooking oil, grease and detergent residue become embedded. Once it's embedded it requires professional cleaning to remove.



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Staying warm and safe all year-long

(NC) The ice storm that hit Southern Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes made it difficult for thousands to stay warm and safe this past holiday season. Some residents found refuge in warming centres, while others decided to hunker down in their cold and dark homes. A few lucky families huddled together into one room that thankfully had a fireplace or wood-burning stove. If the difficulties of the winter so far has you thinking about investing in a fireplace or wood-burning stove, the experts from Desjardins Insurance have some suggestions on how you can protect your loved-ones and your home from damage and loss:

Fire prevention:

- Equip your home with smoke detectors. If they are well located and
 maintained, they can save your life. Clean them regularly and replace the
 batteries twice a year, typically in March and November when the clocks
 are reset. Also consider equipping your home with a fire alarm system
 connected to a remote monitoring center.
- Place one or more fire extinguishers in locations that all family members can easily access and be sure they know how to use them properly.
- Maintain your furnace and hot water heater on a regular basis. This should also include replacing your furnace filter every 90 days.
- Hire a professional to clean your furnace and/or fireplace chimney regularly to prevent creosote build-up. Also make sure that your flue vents are in good working order.
- If you regularly use a fireplace or stove, only burn well-seasoned wood

- or special fire logs. Burning other material like cardboard, garbage and plastics will bring chemicals into your home and will create dangerous buildup in your chimney.
- When starting your fire, only use matches and open the damper. This should remain open until your fire is well out and cool.
- While your fire burns, put up a screen to keep kids and pets away from the flame, and to keep the logs and embers in the fireplace.
- Once your fire is out and cooled, keep the ashes in a metal container until they're cold enough to throw out.

CO2 Protection:

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless and colourless gas that is produced by burning fuels. Because it can't be detected by regular means, this gas can make you ill or can kill you.
- As evidenced by the recent ice storm, make sure your home is equipped with a carbon monoxide detector with a battery back-up. These alarms are affordable and can be found in most hardware stores.
- To prevent a CO2 leak, make sure that there is proper air circulation in your home, never use your BBQ inside and if your house has a connected garage, never run your car with the garage door closed.

For more information on how you and your family can stay protected, visit Desjardins Insurance at www.desjardinsgeneralinsurance.com. www.newscanada.com



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Quick tips on staining wood surfaces

(NC) Staining brings out the best in a wood surface. Adding stain to a wooden surface not only aligns the colour to match a room's décor, however it also emphasizes the natural grain pattern on any wood. Staining and finishing furniture, picture frames, and other wood surfaces is a simple DIY project that will refresh the look of any room.

Here are some professional staining tips that focus on pre-staining procedures, effective products, and applications that will ensure the best results for your finished product:

Equipment for project
Fine grit sandpaper
Disposable rubber gloves
Minwax Wood Finishing Cloths
Clean rag
Directions

Sanding: Always prepare the wood with a light sanding. Sanding the wood surface ensures you get a nice even coat of stain when the time comes. Always sand in the direction of the grain to avoid leaving unsightly scratches. Use a fine grit sandpaper or even a very fine grit to get a smooth down appearance. Make sure to remove all the sanding dust before moving on.

Preparation: To keep hands clean, wear the gloves provided in the Minwax Finishing cloths package. Open the front label. Remove a stain cloth. Close the front label to keep cloths from drying out.

Application: Using the stain cloth wipe in the direction of the wood, working the colour into the surface. After the stain has been applied, wipe the stain off immediately for a lighter tone, or for a deeper tone, leave it on 5-10 minutes before wiping off using a clean rag. Similarly to the application of the stain, make sure to wipe off any excess stain going in the direction of the grain of wood. Never allow any excess stain to dry on wood surface—it will cause all sorts of adhesion and other issues.

Evaluation: After letting the finish sit for an hour, evaluate your work. If you are satisfied do not apply any further stain. However, for an even deeper color and sheen, wait one hour, then apply a second coat, using a fresh cloth. Remember – Stain provides colour, but not protection. Once the stain has dried, apply a clear finish product such as Minwax Polycyclic Protective finish to protect both the stain and the wood.

For more information visit www.minwax.com www.newscanada.com



Window Fashions

Window coverings create the backdrop of any space. They form 'the mood of a home, envelop your room in privacy, or frame a scenic view. They can shield morning glare and filter a sunset's warm glow. Whether you are after sleek and clean lines, or soft and elegant movement, you can express your style to create a space that perfectly suits you.

1) What's your space?

Your needs will depend on the room you are looking to decorate. For example, blackout fabrics are best-suited for bedrooms, while dens or living rooms require glare reducing fabrics for watching television and filtering lights.

- 2) Sun Exposure Your room's level of sun exposure will depend on the direction to which it faces. Rooms facing east will get bright morning sun, while rooms facing west will be exposed to intense afternoon heat and light. You can protect these high exposure rooms with pre-set timers on automatic blinds and UV protecting fabrics.
- 3) Is safety a Concern? If you have small children or pets, long cords can be a hazard. Most of our window coverings offer cordless or automation options. automation is also helpful for hard-to-reach shades.
- 4) The Mood. Finally, a window covering should enhance the atmosphere of your space. Choose a style and fabric that compliments your decorating taste. Shades of red, gold, and pink are warm colours while shades of blue, grey, and green are cooler colours.





"Kitchen Talk" BY Jim Lawrence

New Kitchens and your Local Home Show

It's almost spring, the days are getting longer and the air is getting warmer. Before the robins make it back, there is always that sure reminder that spring will soon arrive. What's that reminder? Your local Home Show.

The 2014 home shows in your area will be held April 4th -6th at Harbour Station in Saint John. What can a home show do for you? Lots! If you are thinking about big or small renovations or even building a new home or cottage, you simply must check out a Home Show in your area. This is the place where you can find the very latest in kitchens, flooring, landscaping, counter tops and exciting new home improvement ideas all under one roof. A weekend home show can be many things to different people. It can serve as a cheap date night or a family outing while at the same time offering a very quick and broad educational experience. A home show can bring you up the speed with what's happening and what's new in the reno, building and kitchen businesses.

Even if your building project is completed, it's still a good place to touch base with the industry to check on things like warranties, final touch ups or maybe some minor add ons to your project.

Tips for making the most of a home show.

- 1. Start with your map. When you enter the building, quickly read though the exhibitor list and note the location of any special exhibits you may want to visit. Those particular booths may be very busy and if you want to talk directly with the exhibitor, you may have to check back in a couple of times.
- 2. Seminars. Make note of all seminar times in which you are interested. You will be able to find schedules and times on a poster when you arrive. With this schedule in mind, you will be able to manage your time to include both seminars and exhibitions in your visit. Avondale Kitchens will have the schedule of seminars in their booth for your convenience.

3. Extra time. Plan lots of extra time. You are going to see lots of old friends and family there and by the time you stop and say hi, time will quickly fly by.

For more info on the upcoming home shows check out www.AvondaleKitchens.com or www.MasterPromotions.ca http://www.AvondaleKitchens.com/
This article was written by Jim Lawrence of Avondale Kitchens.com
They have designers in your area every week doing professional designs and quotes.





Practice garage and workshop smarts

Completing home improvement projects on your own can be both rewarding and financially responsible. A growing number of homeowners are dabbling in do-it-yourself projects, recognizing both the personal and financial rewards of such undertakings. As more and more homeowners perform their own renovations and other improvement projects, many are outfitting their homes with state-of-the-art workshops and transforming garages into a do-it-yourselfer's paradise.

Safety is vital in any workshop. During a typical home renovation, homeowners will use all sorts of dangerous tools and chemicals, and even the simplest mishap can result in a serious injury. Following safety rules can reduce the risk of injury.

Know your tools

Before novice do-it-yourselfers begin working with power tools, they should familiarize themselves with their owners' manuals and the operating instructions. Some home-improvement retailers offer classes in various home renovation projects and may be able to teach tool usage. Do-it-yourselfers should consult professionals with regard to proper tool use and safety. Do not use tools for purposes other than what the tool was intended to do. If machine guards are provided, they should be used and never removed.

Wear safety gear

Eye, ear and breathing protection are key in any workshop environment. Dust and chemical gases may be present when working with certain products, and debris can be kicked up and enter the eyes, causing irritation or even blindness. Loud power tools can damage sensitive ears, especially when used in a contained room. Always wear goggles, sound-muffling earphones and dust masks when working.

Assess physical well-being

Do-it-yourselfers should never work with machinery if they are feeling sick or fatigued or while taking medication that can affect concentration or alertness. All it takes is a moment of distraction to cause an injury.

Never surprise anyone who is working with power tools and keep unnecessary people out of the workshop, where they might chat and distract others from the tasks at hand.

Factor in ergonomics

Failure to work in comfortable conditions can result in repetition injuries or muscle strain. Make the workshop as comfortable as possible. Ensure the work table is at the right height. Use a rubber mat on the floor to reduce standing fatigue. Have a stool or chair available for taking breaks.

Keep a clean shop

Power cords strewn around the workshop present a tripping hazard. They also make it possible to drag sharp or heavy tools off of tables and workbenches if the cords are pulled or tripped over. A neat workshop is a safer workshop. Pay attention to where tools are kept and keep cords manageable.

Dress appropriately

Loose clothing and hair can become tangled or lodged in equipment. Do not wear jewelry. Dress comfortably but appropriately for the workshop, being sure to wear sturdy shoes.

Lock it up

Children and pets are curious and may wander into a workshop to explore. They can become seriously ill or injured by the bevy of chemicals and tools used for common projects. Some items are flammable and sharp and should always be out of reach. Locking cabinets and drawers can keep tools inaccessible. Also warn youngsters against entering the workshop unattended.

As more people engage in do-it-yourself projects, homeowners should reacquaint themselves with safety procedures. SH142909



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Learn how to inspect your new home before possession

(NC) Before you can move in to a newly built home, there is a critical first step that all Ontario buyers must take: the Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI). Much more than just a quick tour, the PDI represents the first opportunity for buyers to view their home in its completed state and to thoroughly assess its condition.

All builders in Ontario are required by law to conduct a PDI with their customers prior to the date of possession. This inspection is part of your new home warranty, provided by your builder and backed by Tarion Warranty Corporation.

The PDI is your first opportunity to view your home in its entirety, learn about how to maintain it and take stock of anything that may be damaged, incomplete, missing, or not working properly.

You may be excited to show it off to your friends and family, but now is not the time. The PDI is an important part of taking possession and deserves your full attention, say advisers in this field. If you are not able to attend yourself, you can ask someone you trust to be there on your behalf.

During the PDI, you should carefully examine your home both inside and out. Look for things like chips in bathtubs and sinks, scratches on counter tops, damage to floors, walls, cabinetry (and other finishings) and look for doors and windows that are not secure or do not open and close easily. Outside, check things like the quality of brickwork and siding, whether window screens have been installed, and inspect the appearance of the driveway and landscaping.

Your builder's representative will record it all on a PDI form. Review the form carefully to make sure it's complete. Once done, you will get a copy, which will become the official record of the condition of your home before you moved in.

If at a later time, there is a disagreement between you and the builder (about damage before, or after possession) Tarion, which regulates new home builders and guarantees your warranty, may use your PDI form for reference.

Sometimes, due to weather or other factors, you may not be able to inspect a certain item. If you are unable to assess something during the PDI, simply make note of it on the form.

The PDI is also an excellent opportunity to ask questions and learn about how your home functions. Your builder will show you how to operate your home's systems, like heating, electrical, air conditioning, and plumbing, and provide you with operating manuals.

Your new home warranty doesn't begin or end at the PDI – it all begins when you sign a purchase of sale agreement with your builder, and stays with the home for seven years. For more information about the PDI, and to access a detailed checklist, visit tarion.com.

www.newscanada.com





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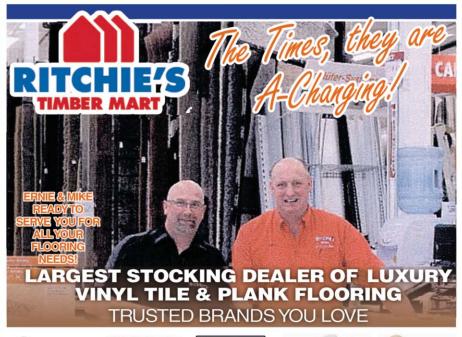


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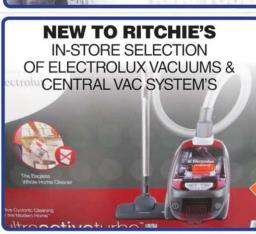
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