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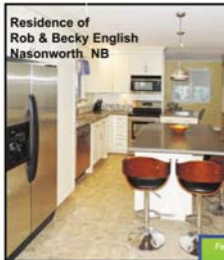
HOMES

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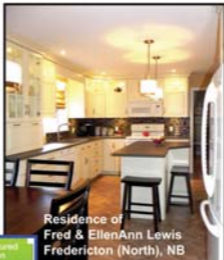




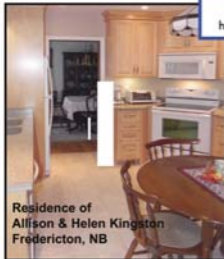
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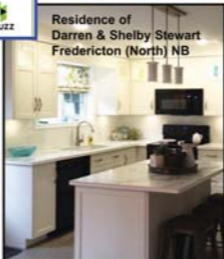
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5 FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEATING YOUR HOME

(NC) As Canadians, we rely on heating systems more than most nations in the world. But our need doesn't necessarily translate into knowledge. If you're unhappy with the comfort or cost of keeping your home warm in winter, here are some things to consider.

Insulation is key. While the kind of energy source and heating equipment you have can affect annual costs a lot, don't even think about upgrading your system until you've optimized insulation levels in your home. For most places in Canada, 22 inches of batt or loose-fill insulation in the attic makes sense. This is more than many homes have, but it pays to go beyond the basics when it comes to insulation. Choose natural gas if you can. Natural gas is abundant in Canada and also burns cleanly in furnaces and boilers that operate at efficiencies greater than 95 per cent. Although prices fluctuate, natural gas always averages out to be the cheapest and most stable source of energy for home heating.

Consider heat pump technology. If you don't have access to natural gas where you live, electric heat pumps make sense because they offer the next most economical source of heat. For every dollar you spend on electricity for a heat pump, the system delivers \$2 to \$3 worth of heat, compared with electric baseboard resistance heaters. Most heat pumps can also operate in reverse, cooling your home in summer. Explore smart controls. We've had programmable thermostats for a long time, but the electronics that control heating systems are advancing beyond these basics. Wireless thermostats, for example, make it easy to control the temperature of different rooms independently. Why heat a room you won't be using at certain times of the day? Today's best control systems also deliver temperature levels that are more stable and consistent than ever, especially with hot water heating systems.

Hydronic heating conversion. "Hydronic" is a fancy word used to describe hot water heating systems. Hot water radiators and in-floor heating provide some of the nicest and most even heat you'll experience. Since there are no fans involved, there's no moving air to kick up dust. Hydronic heating is also one of the best options for converting from electric baseboard heaters to natural gas.

Regardless of what insulation or heating system changes you want to make to your home, be sure to hire a qualified contractor to do the work. Home heating systems are not DIY projects — you need an expert who knows all the safety requirements. Electrical and gas contractors need to be licensed, so never hire someone you isn't.

Find more information at www.gettinwriting.ca.
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RETHINK RENOVATION MATERIALS TO ENSURE SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE

By Scott McGillivray

(NC) We're fortunate in Canada to be protected by strong building codes that ensure our homes are safe and efficient. Building codes set out what we need to achieve and standards that need to be met, but typically, the choice of building materials remains at the discretion of the homeowner or contractor. That's where potential lies to either get things right or to make costly mistakes. That's because not all building materials are created equal. And one of the riskiest places to cut corners is with what's behind your walls.

When it comes to budgets, many people mistakenly believe that what you don't see doesn't really matter, and instead opt to focus on finishes. Yet, the opposite is true. Take insulation, for example. Some insulation materials can settle and compact over time, affecting the R-value. Others are susceptible to mould and mildew should they come into contact with moisture, which can create serious air quality issues, impacting occupant health. I always advocate using quality building materials that will stand the test of time and conditions.

It's best to seek a product that provides multiple advantages, like Roxul Comfortbatt, Safe 'n' Sound and Comfortboard insulation. Non-combustible and made from inorganic materials, this insulation will not only resist ignition when exposed to fire, it won't contribute to harmful smoke or toxic gases. Instead, it will slow the spread of fire, protecting escape routes to provide extra time to get to safety. Inorganic stone wool also resists moisture and is ideal for basement applications or areas with higher humidity. It offers great thermal performance and sound resistance, and is easy to install, cutting with a simple bread knife. Importantly, it's also dimensionally stable, which means it will stay in place to provide durability and performance over the life of the building.

I always recommend choosing quality materials over lesser options. Cheap alternatives may seem attractive at first, but rarely prove so over the long run. Quality materials should offer a variety of benefits. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Does it help with fire safety? Is it sustainable and environmentally friendly? Will it perform? Will it last? How will it impact air quality, occupant comfort, and efficiency? Materials matter, and when you consider lifecycle costs, quality products are usually the better choice. Ultimately, no one wants to replace or repair something down the road that should have gone the distance.

Scott McGillivray is the host of the hit HGTV series Income Property and Moving the McGillivrays, a full-time real estate investor, contractor, author, and educator.

www.newscanada.com





THINK BEFORE YOU THROW OUT THAT OLD HARD DRIVE

(NC) Most of us understand that throwing out an old computer is just not safe, so we've learned to pull the hard drives and now have a small stockpile somewhere collecting dust. But the real issue is what we are doing with them afterwards.

Most Canadians feel that wiping or disposing of electronic information on their own seems like the easy and secure thing to do, and even 59 per cent of small businesses do it, according to recent Shred-it research. But this solution still leaves you exposed to several risks, including fraud and identity theft.

Here are some popular DIY methods that don't work:

Delete/degauss/reformat. This method can still miss key places where information is stored. While some software does reformat hard drives, often not all information is deleted. Alarming, a recent study found that out of 200 used (reformatted/deleted) hard drives bought from eBay, they were able to recover information from 67 per cent of them.

Smash it with a hammer. This approach can be hit-or-miss. Without a proper way to verify the right parts have been destroyed, you risk throwing out a hard drive with all your data still on it, and potentially hurt yourself in the process.

Stockpile them. Having old hard drives in one location increases your risk of a data breach, as anyone with access could simply walk away with them.

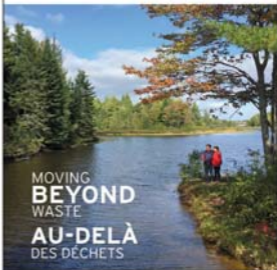
The only way to truly ensure that your information is safe is to have the hard drive destroyed securely with a trusted third-party like Shred-it that either crushes or shears it into smaller pieces. When selecting a provider, look for one that has a secure chain of custody to give you peace of mind knowing that your information is secure.
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CREATING A CONNECTED HOME

(NC) New smart home innovations are changing the way we interact with virtually every aspect of our houses, condos and apartments, helping save time, money and energy. Tech expert and author Amber Mac shares her thoughts on smart home products and services that offer the best bang for your buck.

1. Smart appliances. Smart home appliances deliver real everyday convenience, allowing you to control and monitor their activities right from your phone. GE's new Wi-Fi Connect app puts control of your fridge, stove, dishwasher and laundry right at your fingertips. Running late? Use the app to set the extended tumble feature on your dryer, ensuring your clothes stay wrinkle-free.

2. High-tech "recipes." Create your own digital recipes to make your home smarter.

A great program is IFTTT (If This Then That), an app that allows you to automate and connect your favourite web services and smart products. For example, you can set-up an applet to automatically unlock your door when you're just steps away, mute your phone when your calendar shows that you're in a meeting or even give you a ring when your oven is adequately heated.

3. Voice assistants. Voice assistants, like the highly anticipated Google Home, can help busy families manage day-to-day tasks. Ask a simple question and get real-time answers, including the latest weather, traffic, financial information, sports scores and information for local businesses. Plus, thanks to its integration with other smart home apps, you can use a simple voice request to get a recipe, play music, turn on your lights, adjust the temperature in your home or switch on your favourite movie.

4. Smart security. Some technologies add real value



to our lives, and what could possibly be more valuable than the safety and security of our loved ones? Smart home security systems allow you to monitor the comings and goings of your family and any visitors, alerting you when suspicious activity is detected. The August Smart Lock is especially great for weekend guests, allowing you to give them access to your home without providing a key.

5. Energy efficiency. Finally, save money and protect the planet with smart thermostats that can automatically monitor and manage the temperature in your home. The Nest Thermostat learns when you're away and sets itself to an eco-temperature to save energy. Ready to head home? Adjust the temperature from your phone to ensure it'll be cozy when you arrive.

Find more information online at geappliances.ca.
www.newscanada.com

SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPROVE INDOOR AIR QUALITY FOR BETTER HEALTH

By Scott McGillivray

(NC) When it comes to our homes, we tend to focus on new renovation projects, upgrades and daily chores. While our space can look modern and clean, the air inside it may be less than ideal, loaded with unseen allergens, dust mites, mould, volatile organic compounds, pet dander and more--all of which can wreak havoc on our health.

As a contractor, I've seen it all from mouldy attics to walls concealing serious moisture problems. To improve a home's air quality, I recommend tackling the main things that can affect it.

Ventilation. Does dust in your home seem to accumulate faster than the speed of light? Excessive dust is often symptomatic of a larger issue. Create a calendar reminder for vents and fans to be cleaned and filters to be replaced routinely to prevent dust from constantly re-circulating throughout your home. Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter that traps tiny particles so you're less likely to breathe them in. Also remember to wash sheets and vacuum mattresses regularly.

Harmful chemicals. Volatile organic compounds negatively impact air quality and personal health. Choose products that say low VOC or no VOC. Paint, building materials, furniture and floor polishes, cleaning solvents and even air fresheners often contain VOCs. Be mindful of the products you're using daily, and choose better alternatives whenever possible.

Mould. Perform a mould check at least once a year. Look for discolouration or dark spots on surfaces. Wearing gloves and a mask, remove visible mould using mould remover. Moisture, especially plumbing or roofing leaks, is among the primary causes of mould. For larger areas of mould, call in the pros



to ensure that your home and air are safe.

Air Purifier. Take your home's air quality to the next level by investing in an air purifier--they're perfect for common living spaces such as kitchens and bedrooms. In my home, I use Oreck's Air Response air purifier that uses a HEPA filter with carbon. It traps 99 per cent of allergens, smoke, dust and odours and has a convenient air quality indicator that changes colour when measuring the air purity. Other units, like Oreck's True Response with Truman Cell technology, purify the air without ever needing filter replacement. It draws in pollutants like a magnet using positively and negatively charged ions.

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KEEPING YOUR IMPORTANT DATA SAFE ON YOUR DEVICES

(NC) Our interconnected, always-on lifestyle has plenty of benefits, but one of the occasional downsides is having to juggle a number of devices for both work and play. You can help maintain good work-life balance by making sure that whether personal or professional, your laptops, tablets and smartphones keep your sensitive information secure. Protect your photos, calendars, social data and even money with these five easy steps.

1. Keep your device up-to-date. Install updates to your operating system, apps and antivirus and firewall software as soon as they become available. Set software and apps to auto-update so you don't miss out on the latest security features.

2. Download with discretion. Install apps and download or transfer files only from reputable, trusted sources. Delete suspicious emails and messages and don't open attachments, links, MMS, or SMS messages from unknown sources.

3. Be wise with Wi-Fi. Use password protected and trusted Wi-Fi connections. Turn off Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth services when not in use. When making on-line purchases, stick to your home network or turn on your data.

4. Set strong passwords. Think of your password as a guard that stands between your personal information and potential online risks. Make your password stronger by using the first letter of each word of a memorable sentence or phrase, then make it even tougher by changing some of the letters to numbers or special characters.

5. Keep your number to yourself. Don't share your mobile phone number on public websites and social networks, as this can make you more vulnerable to malware attacks.

Find more information online at www.GetCyberSafe.ca.

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VERSATILE ROOMS FOR TODAY'S MODERN FAMILIES

(NC) With the cooler months upon us, families will be spending more time indoors and challenged with how to keep family rooms fun and functional, without completely abandoning the design aesthetic. This fall, make some updates to the most popular room in the home that will enable you to enjoy the space without compromising on style with versatile design tips from Sharon Grech, colour and design expert for Benjamin Moore.

Comfy, functional and attractive furniture. "Many of us don't have both a formal living room and a casual family room, so the family room usually does double duty," says Grech. "Since it's the place to bond with your kids and also welcome guests, select pieces that are versatile, like a large coffee table with storage inside or underneath for magazines, board games or movies. If you have children, a classic armoire or built-in storage wall works well to hide toys and clutter when guests come over. A sectional sofa is the latest trend that's chic but also very comfortable with more seating options, making it perfect for large families and gatherings."

Inviting family room colours. Select paint colours that help everyone unwind. Soft greys and blues are very welcoming and soothing, encouraging people to relax and unwind. "Try Wythe Blue HC-143 or Nimbus Grey 2131-50 for wonderful options that can be kicked up a notch with accent pieces in bold pops of colour, says Grech. You can also try a soft green, such as Salisbury Green HC-139, or a calming violet like Porcelain 2113-60. For living rooms, I often recommend Benjamin Moore Aura in an eggshell finish is great for both durability and colour vitality."

The right layout. These days, families are doing much more than watching TV in their family rooms. If you can divide your space and create either a cozy nook for reading, using a laptop, or a play area, the whole family can spend time together in one space, while doing the things they love to do.

Centering the furniture in the room and keeping it away from the edges creates a more intimate feeling in the space, while also allowing you to use the back of the couch as a room divider. A neat decorating trick for parents with little kids is to incorporate a bold focal point such as a large, colourful piece of art to help draw guests' attention away from those places you don't want them to notice.

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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CYBERBULLYING

(NC) With a new school year in full swing, it's a good idea for parents to stay vigilant against online problems kids can face. Cyberbullying is one concern many parents have, and with good reason — it's becoming a more common and threatening event.

"There's an increased danger for rapid escalation of cyberbullying, with participants and their victims growing exponentially," explains Nimmi Kanji, director of Telus Wise Internet and Smartphone Education.

The more you know about cyberbullying, the easier it is to prevent it. Here are four things that'll help you keep it from happening to your kids this year, or teach you what to do if it does.

It's more common than you think. Almost one in five Canadian children have been the victim of cyberbullying, while one in four admit they have said something mean online. That means that many more have witnessed it. Your children are not immune. Have you spoken to them about it?

Cyberbullying and bullying are very different. It may be tempting to consider cyberbullying as an online version of traditional schoolyard bullying, but there are a number of differences. Real-world bullying tends to target those who are less popular, while everyone's a potential target online. Similarly, physical strength does not play a central role in cyberbullying.

Keyboard wars make it worse. Because of the nature of digital communication, accurately assessing tone of voice can be difficult, while the inability to see and read body language can mask the effects of what's been written. "These are what we call empathy traps, factors that make it difficult to feel empathy in cyberbullying situations," says Kanji. "They can drive and intensify bullying situations rather quickly."



The law applies. With cyberbullying, "just kids being kids" is not a viable defense. In fact, cyberbullying can have legal consequences both from a civil and criminal perspective. Some provinces mandate school boards have their own anti-bullying plans and penalties for violations.

Learn more about cyberbullying online at telus.com/wise.

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3 REASONS TO SHOP SMALL AND LOCAL

(NC) Neighbourhood stores and restaurants are at the heart of Canadian communities, providing you with the products and services you need all while keeping things personal, tailored and unique. As a consumer, you can support small businesses in your own community by choosing to shop locally this season. Here are three reasons why:

1. Preserve your community's uniqueness. Independent businesses bring character, originality and offer variety in a society that's becoming increasingly homogenized. That special bookstore you've been going to since you were a kid is irreplaceable. Help preserve the one-of-a-kind gems of your community.

2. Keep the money local. The more we shop at local independent businesses, the more likely it is that money will stay in the community and be used to create jobs. Local businesses are able to reinvest a significant portion of their revenue back into the local economy, which benefits our families, friends and neighbours.

3. More personalized service. One of the greatest aspects of purchasing from a local shop is that the owner really gets to know you. Small business owners know the products we buy on a regular basis and offer a personal touch as someone who cares more about providing a quality service!

You can visit Shopsmallbiz.ca to find out more about how the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) and Interac are linking Canadians with local small business on Small Business Saturday and throughout the year. This online directory allows Canadians to find valuable offers from small businesses in their area.

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3 DANGEROUS WINTER DRIVING HABITS TO AVOID

(NC) While walking in a winter wonderland may sound pleasant, driving in one is anything but. Enduring a Canadian winter can be hard on your vehicle, but could you be making it worse?

"Without realizing it, many drivers pick up habits that can cause long-term damage to their vehicles and put themselves and other drivers at risk," explains Darryl Croft, OK Tire automotive expert. "Visibility is crucial and wiper blade maintenance is often overlooked. Wipers should be changed at least once a year, sometimes more often, especially in Canada given the winter wear and tear they endure."

Here are three of the worst winter driving offences that you need to stop immediately.

Letting the snow blow. Removing snow from your vehicle in the freezing cold is a pain, but failing to do so can be dangerous to everyone on the road. When your vehicle picks up speed, snow and ice on the roof can slide onto your windshield, blocking your view. It can also blow onto other cars, temporarily blocking their view or damaging their vehicle. Still not convinced? In some provinces, you can receive a hefty fine if your vehicle is not cleared properly.

Taking a late brake. While braking late is never a good idea, adding wet conditions and icy roads can spell disaster. Slamming the brakes often can increase wear to the braking system and affect your steering components and bearings. Driving cautiously and keeping further distance between cars



will prevent the need to slam on the brakes, avoiding a spinout or potential fender bender.

Forgetting to switch tires. Failing to switch to winter or all-weather tires once the temperature falls below 7°C is one of the riskiest moves you can make when it comes to winter driving. All-weather tires are becoming increasingly popular as their flexibility and design benefit a variety of drivers and driving preferences. Drivers who choose to go with an all-weather over a traditional winter tire experience the benefits of increased traction and control in cold conditions with or without ice and snow, and do not have to worry about storing the second set or seasonal changeovers. Winter tires, by comparison, will offer two to three times the number of sipes (slits in the rubber) than conventional all-weather tires, providing hundreds of extra biting edges for better traction.

Find more information at www.oktire.com.
www.newscanada.com

IS A HOME EQUITY LINE OF CREDIT RIGHT FOR YOU?

(NC) Buying a new home is an exciting but often stressful experience. The variety of financing options now offered by lenders is overwhelming.

One of the most popular options is a home equity line of credit. With interest rates typically lower than other forms of credit, this line of credit can help you reach your financial goals. However, there are several factors to consider when deciding if this product is right for you.

Banks market home equity lines of credit under different names, which might make it challenging to recognize when you are being offered one. They are commonly combined with a regular term mortgage in the form of a “readvanceable mortgage.”

When combined this way, the credit limit on your home equity line of credit will often increase automatically as you pay down the principal on your mortgage. A readvanceable mortgage may also tie together other credit and banking products —such as personal loans, credit cards and car loans — under a single credit limit.

Benefits of bundling these products together include convenience and lower interest rates. But the downsides include fees and restrictions if you want to switch to another lender, and variable interest rates that could increase on short notice. Your financial institution also has the right to demand that you pay the full amount owing at any time.

When deciding if this lending product is right for you, remember that your home is likely your biggest investment. You should beware of overborrowing against its equity, especially if you're counting on it to fund your retirement.

“Most lenders allow you to make interest-only payments on your home equity line of credit, making it easier to delay repaying the principal balance,” explains Lucie Tedesco, commissioner of the Finan-



cial Consumer Agency of Canada. “Continually borrowing against your home's equity without repaying the principal can jeopardize your long-term financial security. For instance, in the event of a housing market correction you might owe more than what your home is worth.”

Ask yourself if a low interest rate and easy access to credit may encourage you to spend more than you can afford to pay back. You could find yourself in a debt spiral, using additional home equity just to stay current on your mortgage. This could make you more vulnerable to unforeseeable events, like job loss, illness or an interest rate hike.

Consider creating your own plan to pay down the principal amount borrowed over a fixed period. Aim to pay more than the minimum payment or interest every month. With a home equity line of credit, there is usually no penalty to pay back as much as you can at any time.

Find more information online at canada.ca/money.
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PICK THE RIGHT BOOTS FOR CANADIAN WINTERS

(NC) Do you try to hold winter at bay by keeping your winter boots packed away until the first snowstorm hits? Although denying the inevitable onset of our harshest season may give you a psychological lift, experts say it's important to get your winter footwear out and thoroughly checked over well before winter arrives with a fury.

"Canadian winters are tough— frigid temperatures, ice-covered paths and endless snow and slush can cause serious harm unless you are prepared," explains Peter Morcom, president of the Pedorthic Association of Canada and a Canadian certified pedorthist. "A quality pair of lined, properly fitted winter boots is essential for winter in Canada."

Although he doesn't recommend one style or brand of boots, Morcom says these seven tips will help ensure you are well-equipped for everything winter has in store.

1. Winter footwear doesn't last indefinitely, typically only one to three seasons. If you are using the same pair of boots as last winter, inspect them closely to make sure there are no rips or cracks that could allow water to permeate.

2. Traction is key. To minimize slipping, select footwear that has a more aggressive tread and a sole made with softer materials such as rubber. If you have balance issues and are concerned about falling, buy cleats that stretch over your boots for extra traction.

3. Only buy footwear that is waterproof, and wear moisture-wicking socks to further protect your feet. Wet feet increase the risk of frostbite and fungal or bacterial infection.

4. Make sure your boots fit properly. Your feet can change size over time and footwear sizes differ from style to style, so have your feet measured every time and only buy boots that feel comfortable the first time you try them on.



5. If you spend a lot of time outside, choose a pair of boots with a colder temperature range than you need as they will provide you with extra comfort and protection.

6. Don't buy boots that aren't supportive. Some fashionable sheepskin styles of boots look cozy and warm but they won't provide the support your feet and lower limbs require. Stylish, leather-heeled boots should be kept for special occasions.

7. Don't ask your children to wear hand-me-down boots or buy boots with room for them to grow. Boots that are too big or too small will chafe or squish their toes, which will cause blisters and rubs.

Find more information at pedorthic.ca.

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THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE PAYING A CONTRACTOR UP FRONT

(NC) You've decided to get going on your dream renovation and worked out the details with a contractor. Now you're anxious to get the work started. But the contractor wants half the money up front. What should you do?

Think very carefully before paying. Then think about finding a different contractor.

Outside of specific circumstances — such as pre-ordering high-value custom products that cannot be returned, paying for permit fees, road cuts, tree removal, building demolition, or moving hydro wires — down payments for work not yet completed should never amount to much more than 10 per cent of the total cost. If your contractor is providing design services separately from renovation services, these may also need to be paid for prior to the construction work starting.

Reputable reno professionals shouldn't need your money to finance their business and should bill you in proportion to what has been completed. A deposit serves mainly to confirm your good faith commitment to the project, as set out in your contract.

If a contractor wants most or all the money up front (and often in cash), they may be running an under-the-table operation, cheating on their taxes, skipping building permits and proper business insurance — all of which put you at risk. These are situations where fly-by-night contractors may not do the work promised and the homeowners may never see their money again. And without a written contract, there will be almost nothing they can do about it.

Most renovation contracts, particularly for larger projects, have a clear payment schedule laid out that ties payments to progress milestones, so you pay an amount proportionate to the percentage of work completed. That's fair to both you and the contractor. Small jobs may only require a small deposit and full payment upon completion. In no case should you have to pay a large percentage or all of the costs before the work is done.

For consumers, the key to renovating the smart and safe way lies in being informed about how the renovation business works. You can find a wealth of practical information from the Canadian Home Builders' Association at www.getitwriting.ca.
www.newscanada.com



SHOULD YOU DO IT YOURSELF?

(NC) Planning a DIY renovation project? Here are some questions to ask yourself first.

Do you have the skills? Many of today's home improvement products make it easy for do-it-yourselfers, but other projects require specialized skills. Seeing something done on a television renovation show isn't the same as having practical experience. Getting in over your head can end up costing more money, and frustration than hiring a professional in the first place.

Do you have the time? Renovation projects can take a lot of time to complete. If the work disrupts your day-to-day routine — such as with kitchen or bathroom renovations — or exposes your home to weather — like in roofing projects or exterior refinishing — delays can be a real problem. Be realistic about how much time the work will take and if you're able to meet this schedule.

Are you trying to save money? If your primary reason for doing-it-yourself is to save money, talk to a contractor before you make a final decision. They may be able to suggest ways of reducing the cost of your project while still using professional services.

For more information at www.getitwriting.ca.
www.newscanada.com

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BUYING APPLIANCES



(NC) With so many options to consider, shopping for appliances can sometimes feel overwhelming. Function, size and design — it's about finding the right model for your lifestyle. Here are a few helpful insights from The Home Depot Canada to consider before making your next appliance purchase.

Refrigerator

Function. The sky's the limit when it comes to configuration — top-mount, bottom-mount and side-by-side are just the beginning. Review your daily needs and consider special features such as easy access doors, multi-tier freezer sections, icemakers, second refrigerator drawer options, convertible freezer sections, wine chillers and even smart home-connected capabilities.

Design. Think outside traditional white or stainless-steel finishes. Instead, bring a contemporary feel to your kitchen with slate, glossy or matte black stainless or even a warm, gold-hued veneer.

Range

Configuration. New designs have a host of convenient options available, like double ovens that cook at two different temperatures simultaneously and warming and baking drawers to help with multi-tasking and entertaining. If space is tight, also consider installing a separate cooktop for maxi-

mum flexibility in your kitchen.

Cooking requirements. If take-out is your regular go-to, a standard electric model will work for your needs. However, if you are an aspiring chef take it up a notch and consider going with either gas or induction, which both deliver intense heat for quick cooking and boiling. If you have small children, induction cooking is a safer alternative because the coils are underneath glass, protecting little hands.

Dishwasher

Capability. Take the work out of washing dishes by opting for a dishwasher with multiple tiers and washer arms for full water coverage. To ensure your cycle doesn't stop until your dishes are clean, look for models with new sensor technology that monitor food debris in the water. Ensure the model you choose considers future changes to your family size so it grows with you, and look into getting a model with a third rack.

Efficiency. Energy efficient options can provide long-term savings to your monthly bills. For example, two-drawer dishwashers operate like separate dishwashers in one unit, offering increased flexibility and efficiency. To save you time, look for bonus features like quiet operation or advanced cleaning functions.

www.newscanada.com

Kitchen Talk" BY Jim Lawrence

www.Houzz.com & Facebook is the Hot Spot for kitchen ideas.

There is whole generation gap between my daughter and I. It's getting better now that I am a grandpa and it helps when she can get free baby sitting from me. But still, most of the time her Mom (that's my wife) has to translate our comments to each other for us to understand what the other just said. But I just got one up on her the other day...here goes her quote onto my Facebook..."You're right Dad, this Houzz is the best app ever ". I will take the credit on this one because I don't win many family issues.

On the serious side, if you are doing any type of building, decorating, designing or kitchen or bath projects, it would be wise to check out HOUZZ.com. For design ideas for kitchens and baths, these guys are without question the hottest spot on the planet. www.HOUZZ.com is a Pinterest type of web site devoted to house and home ideas. It's incredibly easy to navigate and does an unbelievable job while scrolling through using an I-pad or PC. Of course that does not mean you cannot still work through magazines, or newspapers such as the one you are now reading. All sources of design ideas will enhance any project, and if you are working with a professional designer, Houzz will help jump start the design process. Just be careful, it's addictive!

On the social Media side, if you do Facebook, and if you want to see Amazing Kitchen Before and After's, check out <https://www.facebook.com/AvondaleKitchensAndBaths>, not only are these great make-overs, but the page is full of real kitchens by real people all in your local and surrounding area.

Here is a tip you may not know: When you like a page/company (not the posted photo), there is a drop down menu on the like button, that allows you to select your notification settings, so you will automatically receive the new postings onto your newsfeed. Now you will never miss a post from a favourite page!

This article was written by Jim Lawrence
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TRANSFORM YOUR DARK ATTIC INTO USABLE BRIGHT SPACE



(NC) An attic or loft conversion is a terrific way to maximize the unused square footage and increase the value of your home. Depending on your family's needs, you can renovate the space to turn it into a bedroom, studio, office/study, or kids' playroom. Here are some ideas to help you turn this design challenge into a valuable addition to your home.

Embrace architectural features. Often seen as a negative, the attic's classic defining feature is usually a steeply sloped ceiling. Instead of trying to hide it, why not show it off? Create a statement with wood paneling for a cottage or country chic look. Pallet wood is another cost-effective way to achieve farmhouse décor style, a top trend for 2017. Check out design magazines and Pinterest boards for more DIY and budget-friendly inspiration.

Customize with built-ins. Attics and lofts have a tricky combination of tight space and awkward layouts, so out-of-the-box items might not work here. Make the best of it and increase storage space with a built-in bed, cabinet or bookcase. You can also DIY with a semi-built-in desk under the eaves with cut-to-order wood for a table and floating shelving.

Experiment with furniture. You can also get creative and

try unconventional furnishings that make use of every inch of space. Scandinavian design is perfect for a cozy yet contemporary look, and its popular low furniture is useful for tighter spaces. Or go bohemian with your mattress directly on the floor or a low coffee table and comfy cushions for seating.

Brighten with natural light. Whatever use you have planned for the space, remember that getting the right amount of daylight is essential for our health and well-being. So, incorporating natural light into your attic with a skylight or roof window is a great idea. Velux offers a wide range of skylights and complimentary products like custom blinds, which are perfect if you're turning your dark unlivable attic into a cozy bedroom.

Cozy up with finishing touches. Making the space feel human and livable is all about the small details. Add texture with comfy pillows, use plenty of white on the walls and furniture, and bring the outside in with cheerful plants and greenery.

Find more information online at velux.ca.
www.newscanada.com

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