

Higher temperatures... lower energy bills?

Dreaming of summer but dreading the higher energy bills associated with trying to keep your home cool and comfortable during the hotter months? The Ontario government has some great tips and programs designed to help people keep their energy costs under control during the summer.

Once again this year, the Ontario government is running its Great Refrigerator Roundup program, which offers free pickup and recycling of that old, energy-sucking refrigerator or freezer you may have sitting in your kitchen or basement. The government estimates that these wheezy old appliances can be costing you an extra \$120-\$150 a year in electricity costs compared to newer and more efficient models. While the Roundup crew is at your place, they'll also haul away your old window air conditioners and dehumidifiers. Once they're done with your old appliances, very little material enters the landfill, so not only are you saving money, you're redirecting waste from the town dump! Visit www.everykilowattcounts.ca for more information about the Roundup program.

While you're on that website, check out the Cool Savings Rebate program if you're considering replacing your central air conditioning system. You could be eligible for up to \$400 in rebates on the purchase and installation of a new system. Even if you just want to replace your old thermostat with a programmable version, you can get \$25 back, which will more than pay for a couple of cool drinks on a patio somewhere.

If you're not in the market for new appliances or central air, you can still save some cash on energy bills by making some simple changes around the house this summer. The Ontario Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure has a ton of simple and clever tips on its website, www.ontario.ca/energysavings. Some of those tips include:

- Turn off your air conditioning when you leave for work, which actually costs less than maintaining a constant cool temperature;
- Cool your home to only 24 or 25 degrees Celsius, and use ceiling fans to circulate the air, making it feel cooler;
- Keep blinds, shades and curtains closed during the day to keep the blazing sun from heating up your home or forcing your air conditioning to work harder;
- Turn off all unnecessary lights (this one saves you money two ways – less energy used in keeping those lights on, and preventing the light from generating heat that makes your A/C work harder);
- Plant deciduous trees (that lose their leaves in winter) on the east, south and west sides of your home. They will filter sunlight in summer and conversely, allow it into the home in winter, to boost your heating system.

Some of those savings will be visible almost immediately, while others will have an effect in the longer term. If you want to think seriously long-term about energy savings, consider checking out Ontario's Home Energy Savings Program which was developed to match rebates from the federal ecoEnergy Rebate Program. More information is available at www.ontario.ca/homeenergy. If you're in the market for a home, your REALTOR® can point out energy efficient features during your home search – just make sure they know you're looking for those features in your new abode.

Readers are encouraged to send questions or request topics to be discussed in this column. Please send your requests to info@thenewsemc.ca