

BY ANDREW CHRISTIE // ILLUSTRATION BY KATHY BOAKE



Is your home READY FOR WINTER?

The effort we put into maintaining our homes, especially on a preventative level, is truly a function of our personalities. Some folks would never think of entering their attic to check for leaks. Others are not physically capable of carrying out some home maintenance tasks, such as climbing a ladder or creeping through a crawlspace. It is always worth the effort to fix the small problems and deficiencies before they become significant expenses. If you lack the skills, knowledge or physicality necessary to do the work, hire someone who does it for a living, and you will save money in the long run.

In southern Georgian Bay, many of us spend more time and money buttoning up our bodies for the upcoming ski season, than we do buttoning up our homes for winter. In the world of building sciences, the term “building envelope” describes all the parts of your home that make up its skin—the parts that will keep the rain, wind and snow out. The building envelope includes roofing materials such as shingles and flashings, windows, masonry systems and siding, caulking joints, foundation walls, and a few other elements.

If you haven't already, have a look at the building envelope of your home. Usually, water entry points, whether at the exterior walls, the roof level, or at the foundation level, can be easily identified by a brief examination.

Walk on the roof, if it's not too steep. Have a look around (at the roof, after enjoying the view for a few moments). If a few shingles have blown off, water may well leak through that area. Junction points where different materials meet require regular sealant work. Check the location where the lower roof meets the higher wall; depending on the nature of the wall cladding, there may be a flashing there that requires sealant work. Examine valley flashings on roofs; if it's not metal, and the flashing has worn, it may leak. Fall is the best time to work in attics, if we can define a best time for such dusty, confined work. A lack of insulation will cost a homeowner plenty in lost heat, and condensation caused by a shortage of insulation can degrade the roof structure. If the attic insulation is less than eight or nine inches deep, for most

types of insulation, you need more.

A faulty eaves trough system sometimes allows water to drain down the walls, causing damage along the way. Check for leaks and damage at the troughs and down pipes. If the eaves trough system fills with leaves, it won't drain properly and it may freeze and crack. Extend the down pipes well away from the home, if necessary. If water is dumped (by the troughs) against the foundation walls, the probability of a basement leak increases exponentially. If there is a wet spot in the basement, even at old homes, there is usually a simple reason, and solution.

Look at the joints around the wall system; re-caulk as required. If a jack-hammer is required to remove old caulking, caulk over it. Just don't tell the Project Manager, (usually your significant other). It takes many years of neglect, normally, before exterior wood fails from moisture. But this might be the year that makes the difference! So have a look at the siding, the wood around windows and doors, and all exterior wood. Be sure to sand enthusiastically before painting or staining, and be sure to prime before painting. The bottom corners of windows, and their sills, are most susceptible to moisture decay. Don't think you need new windows just because of a little soft wood. You have options, notwithstanding other problems at the windows. Some great, new products are available for wood patching. As long as you have two layers of glass that do not flap in a stiff breeze, you can provide a reasonable amount of resistance to heat loss; tighten and seal them if necessary. (Speaking of heating the home, we recommend inviting a qualified heating technician to service the furnace in the fall, before they get super-busy.)

At the foundation level, water enters through specific entry points. Plenty of homes are on the side of the Escarpment, where the big hill sends water streaming toward the home, but have dry basements. So it's really not about the grading, although it can be a factor, especially during spring thaw. Once the water is captured and controlled, by your newly maintained eaves trough system, and the obvious gaps and joints are sealed up, the only available access for water—at most homes—is through a foundation crack. If you have done all the easy stuff, and you think water is coming through a crack, seal the crack location only, then monitor for further water entry. If you have a sump pump, talk to a plumber about installing safety features to prevent flooding. A battery backup power supply is a recommended second step. The first is to—not surprisingly—extend the sump outlet pipe well away from the home.

When prepping your home for winter, we recommend looking at one major section of the home at a time, making notes—if necessary—along the way. First walk the foundations for example, thinking only of water control and possible water infiltration into the basement. Then walk the wall systems. After inspecting the roof, examine all the perimeter walls in the basement. You might see the result of an exterior deficiency down there. Instead of calling in the heavy equipment crew, simply repair the eaves trough, or caulk an open joint around a basement window. Then you can go back to polishing your ski boots. **OH**

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HOME AT THE BEACH



ASKING PRICE: \$649,900
SOLD FOR: The new owners
won't say. But they were
“happy with what we got it for.”

Jim and Pat Geary always thought they would retire to Wasaga Beach in about 15 years. That was, of course, until they saw a house that changed their plans. The Gearys recently purchased a stunning custom-built Cape Cod on 1.7 acres on Golf Course Road, near Marlwood. “We drove by it one day and it had wonderful curb appeal,” Geary says. “The property was spectacular and the house was spectacular.”

They purchased the home, which had been on the market for many months, from listing agent Jen Schoite of Century 21 Millennium Realty in Wasaga Beach. The features include a games room, a wet bar and a two-storey great room. It is professionally landscaped and includes an attached two-and-a-half car garage plus a detached two-car drive-thru garage.

The Gearys have been coming up to the Beach from Schomberg for almost a decade with their two teenaged daughters, who love the sun, sand and excitement at Beach Area One. Their parents fell in love with the town, the environment and the relaxed lifestyle.

It wasn't an easy decision, but the right one for the family, says Geary, who works in marketing and promotions for a huge sporting-goods company.

“I want to live here when I'm younger, not when I'm older,” Geary says happily. The family will move into their fabulous new digs in time for the summer of 2007. **OH**

—Georgette McCulloch