

The house as a system

In recent years, many Canadians have upgraded the energy efficiency of their homes. By adding insulation, installing draftproofing, and improving the efficiency of their heating systems, they have achieved significant savings on their fuel bills.

In some cases, energy-conserving improvements have resulted in unforeseen problems such as moisture build-up on windows or in attics, or inadequate ventilation.

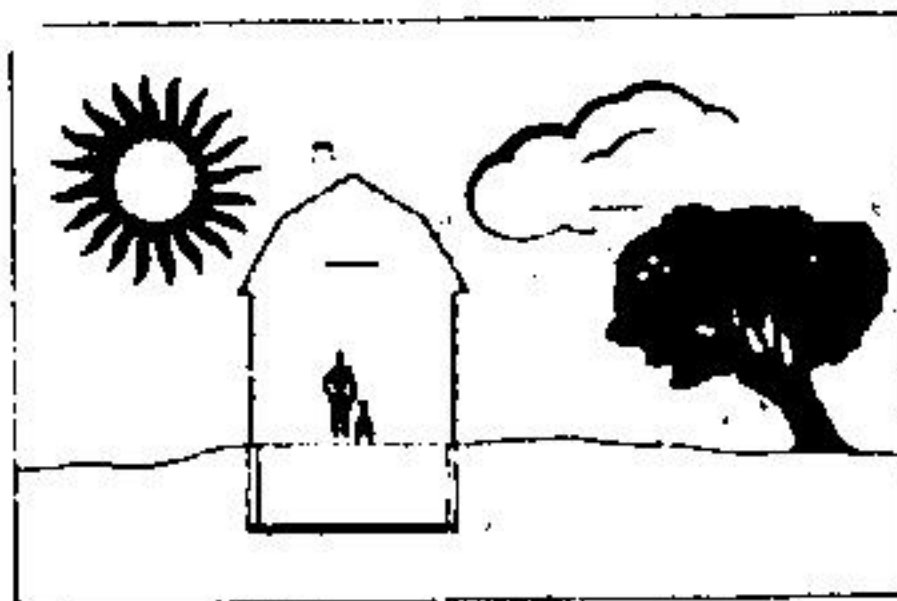
Fortunately, there's an easy way to avoid these problems. It's based on what building professionals refer to as the "house as a system" approach, which recognizes that each house is a dynamic and interactive system of heat, air and moisture flows. These flows need to be kept in proper balance, particularly when home improvements are made.

Keeping the flows in balance is a matter of ensuring that changes to the house, like adding attic insulation or draftproofing, do not adversely affect key determinants of the indoor environment such as indoor humidity, ventilation levels and heating efficiency.

Look before you leap

Using the "house as a system" approach to home improvements is really a question of looking before you leap. It is a matter of using common sense to anticipate how changes to your house will affect the exchange of heat, air and moisture which is continually occurring between your house and the exterior environment.

The manner in which the exchange occurs depends on three components: the building envelope or shell; the mechanical systems for heating, cooling and ventilation; and your lifestyle. Changes in any one of these components will have impacts on the overall balance of heat, air and moisture flows achieved in the system.



This is best illustrated by some examples which cover common changes in the building envelope, mechanical systems and lifestyle. All of the examples outlined below demonstrate how changes in your house influence heat, air and moisture flows, and how care must be taken to properly manage the impacts on all three flows.

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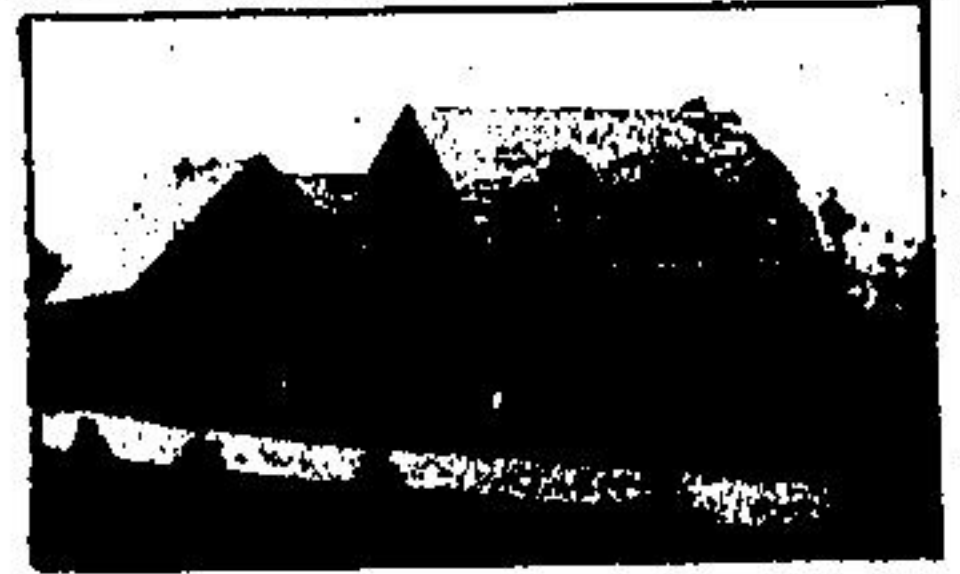


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