

When purchasing appliances, keep energy efficiency in mind

Appliances consume a significant portion of the energy used in a typical Canadian home. That means you can save hundreds of dollars over the life of an appliance by choosing one of the more efficient models available on the market today.

Every appliance you buy should be thought of as having two price tags: the actual purchase price, and the cost of the energy required to operate the appliance. Since the second price tag, the energy costs, can represent hundreds of dollars, it is clearly an important consideration when making your decision.

Calculating the second price tag

All models of electric refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, ranges, clothes washers, and dryers sold in Canada are tested to determine their energy use. The results of these tests must be indicated on an "Energyguide" label attached to every new appliance. All results are presented in kilowatt hours (kWh) per month. For the same size appliances with similar features, the lower the Energyguide rating, the more efficient the appliance.

The Energyguide rating for a given appliance is an essential tool for calculating its second price tag. To arrive at the second price tag for a given appliance, simply multiply its Energyguide rating (kWh/month) by 12 (months). This figure should then be multiplied by the life expect-

ancy of the appliance, which is then multiplied by local electricity costs (dollars/kWh).

Life expectancies vary from appliance to appliance. Dishwashers usually last about 13 years; clothes washers 14 years; refrigerators 17 years; electric ranges and electric clothes dryers 18 years; and freezers about 21 years. Electricity prices will be indicated on your monthly bill, or you can use the national average of 5.5 cents/kWh.

Before setting out to make your purchase, decide what size of appliance you require and what features you want. Then compare the purchase price and second price tag of different models to determine which will cost the least to own and operate in the long run.

Refrigerators

Apart from your furnace and hot water heater, the refrigerator is probably your home's biggest energy user. So it makes sense to buy an energy-efficient model.

First, however, you should select the right size for your needs. Generally speaking, the larger the refrigerator, the more energy it will use. A refrigerator that's too big for your needs will waste both money and energy. On the other hand, a refrigerator that is too small is inconvenient and may waste energy if overcrowded.

Refrigerator manufacturers list the capacity of their units in litres (L) or cubic feet (cu. ft.). The fol-

lowing size suggestions refer to the combined capacity of the refrigerator and freezer sections:

- for one or two people, consider a refrigerator of about 340 L (12 cu. ft.)
- for three or four people, consider a unit of about 395 to 480 L (14 to 17 cu. ft.)
- for each additional person, add 55 L (2 cu. ft.).

The exterior dimensions of a refrigerator will also have an impact on energy use. Sufficient clearances must be provided on all sides of the refrigerator in order for it to operate efficiently. The owner's manual supplied by the manufacturer should provide recommendations.

The style of refrigerator you buy will also have an impact on energy consumption. Units with a single door, in which the freezer compartment is located inside the fridge, are usually the most energy-efficient. However, two-door units, with a separate freezer compartment above or below the refrigerator compartment, are more common. Two- or three-door units, in which the freezer compartment is beside the refrigerator compartment, generally use the most energy.

There are other features to look for when purchasing an energy-efficient refrigerator. For example, most refrigerators have heating coils just under the "skin" to warm the outer surface of the unit near the door opening and prevent condensation from forming. Some refrigerators have an "energy saver" switch that allows you to turn these heating coils down or off. Such a switch can save you money.

Freezers

As with refrigerators, the first step when buying an energy-efficient freezer is to choose the right size for your needs. Most households don't need more than 130 L (4.5 cu. ft.) of capacity per person.

Exterior dimensions of the unit are also important. Generally, clearances of 5 to 7 cm are required on all sides of the unit, but you should consult the owner's manual for details.

Energy efficiency can be affected by such features as the amount of insulation and the type of freezer. Two major freezer types are available in Canada: chest and upright. Chest freezers have the lid on top, whereas upright models resemble a refrigerator. Chest freezers are by far the more popular and more energy-efficient option. With an upright model, some cold air will leak out around the door, and more

will rush out whenever the door is opened. With a chest freezer, cold air tends to stay put inside.

Ranges

The energy efficiency of standard kitchen ranges does not vary greatly from model to model. Even so, choosing one of the more efficient units can produce worthwhile savings.

Keep in mind that self-cleaning ovens are generally better insulated than regular ovens; though they use intense heat during cleaning, they also require less energy to cook your food. If you clean your oven only two or three times a year, you will likely save energy by buying a self-cleaning unit instead of an equivalent, regular oven.

Other features available in conventional ranges also affect energy use. For example, smooth surface cooktops (with the burners under glass) require more energy than conventional burners. Cooktops with a built-in exhaust fan may exhaust a good deal more heated air from your home than a standard range hood, which means that your furnace must work longer and harder to heat the home.

Since Energyguide ratings are only available for electric ranges, it is difficult to compare the energy efficiencies of different gas models. Look for a unit that appears to be well built and well insulated. Be sure the oven door closes properly to minimize heat loss when the oven is on. Above all, look for a unit with electronic ignition. The alternative, a pilot light, wastes energy by burning a small amount of gas at all times.

Dishwashers

About 80 per cent of the energy

required to operate a dishwasher is used to heat water. The most efficient dishwashers, therefore, are the ones that use the least hot water.

Be sure the models you are considering have a switch that allows you to turn off the electric-dry portion of the dishwasher cycle. Air drying is just as effective and requires no energy.

You should also look for a dishwasher with a booster heater or "sani" setting that will bring the temperature of the incoming water up to about 60°C, the operating temperature most manufacturers recommend. A booster heater will allow you to turn the temperature of your hot water tank down to about 55°C, which will significantly reduce your household water heating costs.

Clothes Washers

Be sure to buy a machine that has a cold wash and cold rinse option. By using this setting whenever possible, you can cut energy consumption to far below that indicated in the Energyguide rating (which assumes that warm and hot water settings are frequently used).

You should also look for a machine with a water level control. This can be used to limit water use when you do a small load. If you always do small loads, compact clothes washers can be energy savers.

Clothes Dryers

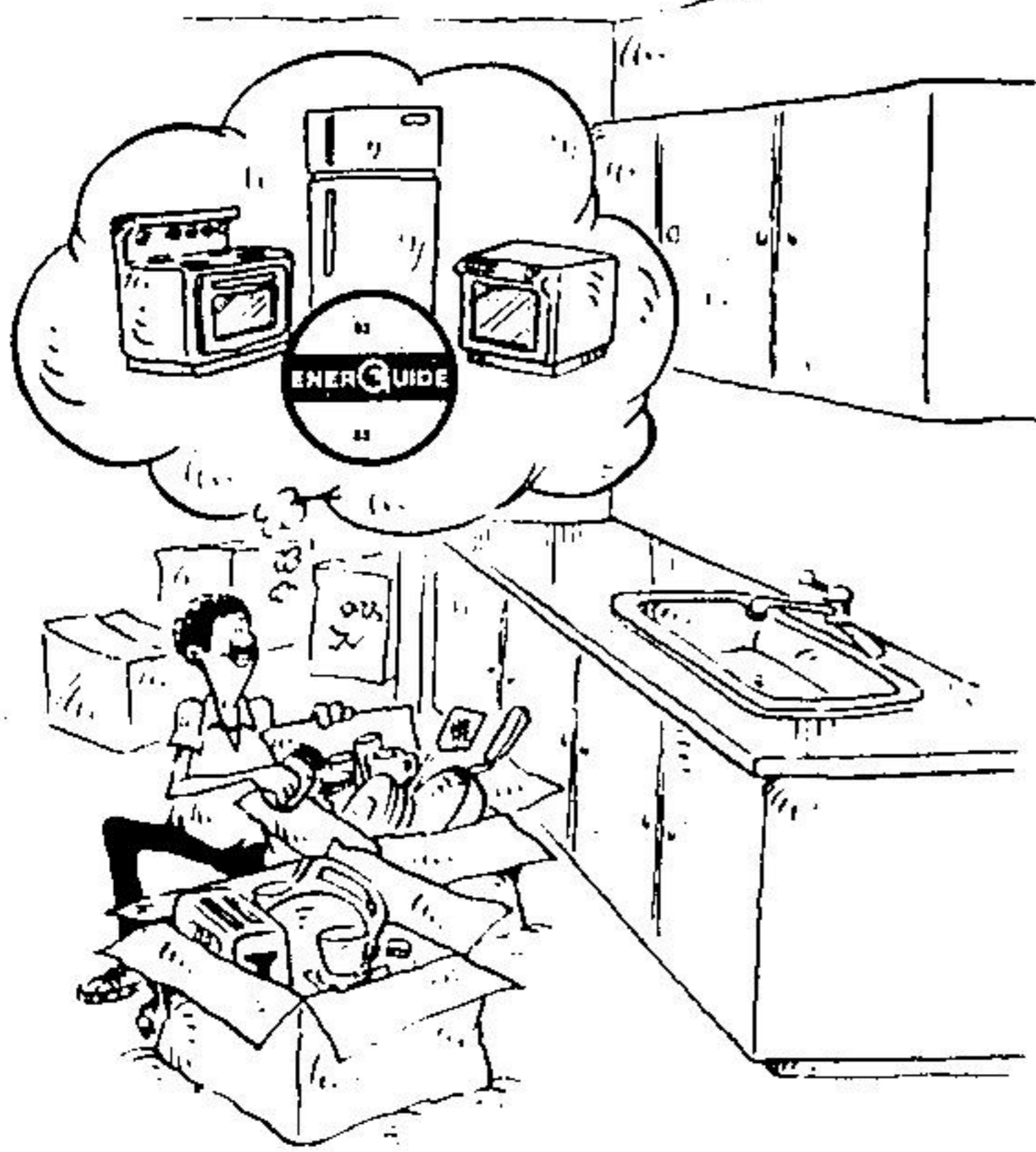
The energy efficiency of dryers varies less from model to model than some other appliances. Nevertheless, by considering the second price tag you can save yourself hundreds of dollars in energy costs over the life of your machine.

The Second Price Tag

Annual and Lifetime Appliance Energy Costs

Energyguide Rating (in kWh per month)	Approximate Energy Costs*	
	Annual	Lifetime (for an appliance that lasts 17 years)
	\$	\$ (rounded)
30	19.80	340.00
40	26.40	450.00
50	33.00	560.00
60	39.60	670.00
70	46.20	790.00
80	52.80	900.00
90	59.40	1010.00
100	66.00	1120.00
110	72.60	1230.00
120	79.20	1350.00
130	85.80	1460.00
140	92.40	1570.00
150	99.00	1680.00

* Assuming electricity costs of 5.5 cents per kWh, the national average in early 1988.



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