

Consumer sense means awareness

Some lucky people pride themselves on their "consumer sense." They have "a nose for bargains" and they enjoy bragging about the great deals they find and the money they save on purchases.

Others aren't so fortunate. They wonder why their money doesn't last, why their dollars don't stretch as far as they should. Their "bargain" purchases turn out to be junk, and they don't know how to find a real bargain that will give them value for their dollars.

How is the smart consumer different from the one who is not so smart? Consumer sense has very little to do with intelligence or education, and a lot to do with awareness.

•The smart consumer is always aware of his or her power as a consumer. Some people believe that companies are more powerful than consumers, that shoppers adapt to the marketplace, rather than the marketplace adapting to shoppers' needs. This simply is not true.

Companies could not survive without consumers, and they make every effort to meet the needs of the people who keep them in business. The smart consumer speaks up when he or she is not satisfied with products or services.

Smart companies and businesses want to know when their customers aren't happy, because they know that unhappy customers will go elsewhere eventually. The smart consumer who complains without getting satisfactory results doesn't hesitate to switch brands or stop patronizing a business.

•Smart consumers are aware of their rights as consumers. Government agencies, local consumer groups and organizations and the Better Business Bureau can provide information about consumers' rights.

•Smart consumers are aware of their choices. They know what products and services are available, and they "do their homework." Before the smart consumer makes a purchase, he or she researches the options, acquires in-depth product knowledge and does some comparison shopping to find the best product or service at the best price.

•Smart consumers are aware that some "bargains" turn out to be very costly. A bargain purchase isn't a bargain at all if the product doesn't last as long as it should, or doesn't work the way it's supposed to. The cheapest product on the market may need to be replaced or repaired much more often than a more expensive, better-quality product does.

Similarly, the smart consumer may take advantage of coupons and rebates, but he or she won't make a purchase solely because of them. Even with a coupon or rebate, a product may not be the best value, or it may not be the product that best meets the needs of an individual consumer.

•Smart consumers are aware that brand names usually offer the best value. Companies spend a great deal of money and effort building their reputations, and they want their customers to be

happy and to pass the word along to friends and relatives. A reputable company makes every effort to resolve consumer complaints and to respond to consumer demand.

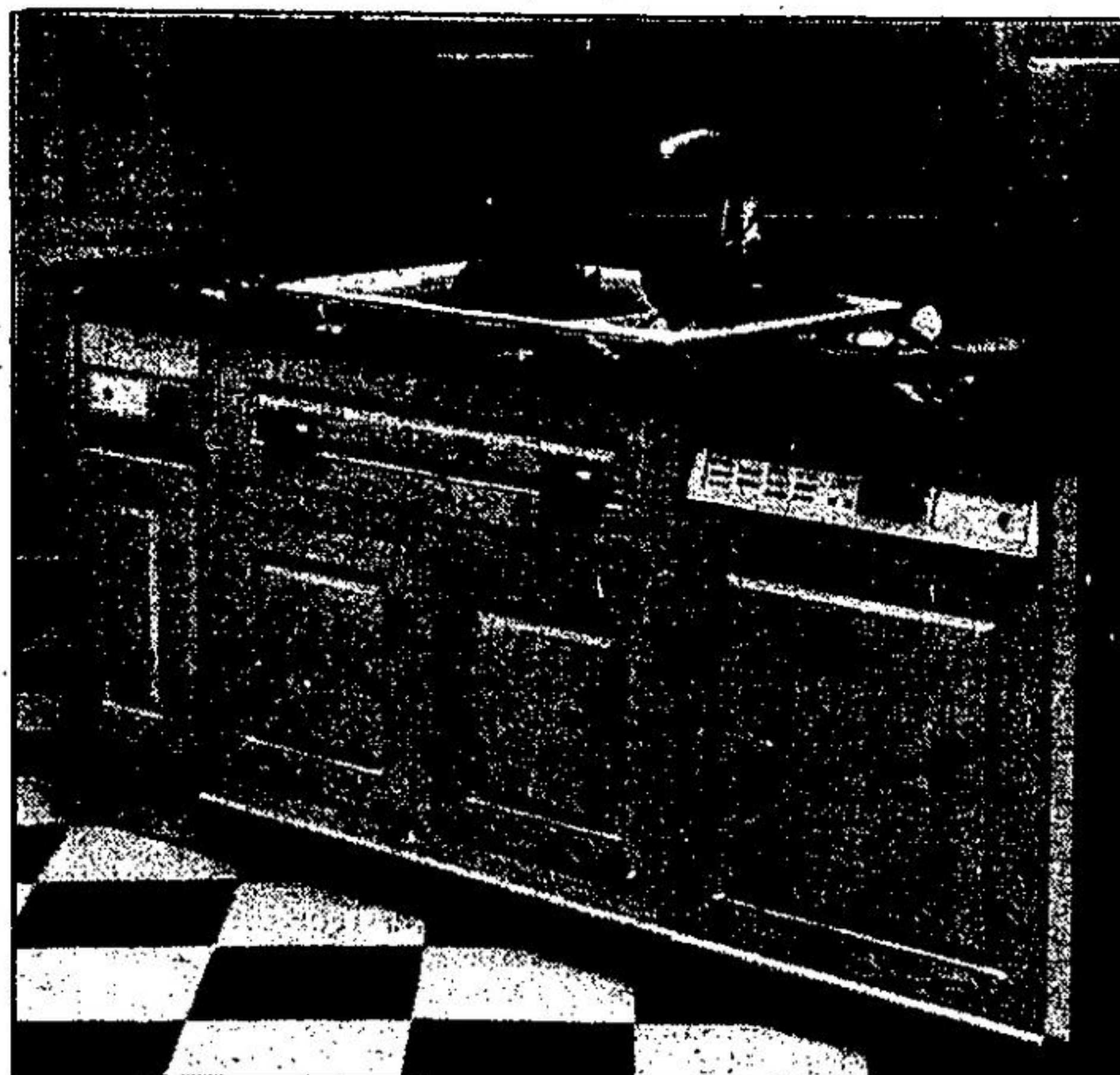
•Smart consumers are aware of their own spending patterns. People are more likely to buy on impulse or to make unwise purchases when they are tired, rushed, depressed or feeling pressured, or when suddenly confronted by the word "sale."

A person with consumer sense stays out of the stores when he or she is feeling vulnerable. And, while it is often possible to get great bargains when there are sales, the smart consumer does not buy something just because it's offered at a fantastically low price, but because it is something which he or she already was planning to buy.

•The smart consumer uses salespeople as resources for information and advice. A knowledgeable salesperson may have valuable "inside information" about products, which can help the consumer to make the best decision.

Most salespeople are reputable professionals who want their customers to keep coming back. The smart consumer develops good relationships with a few trusted salespeople and listens to their advice, but always relies on his or her own judgement.

•The smart consumer is aware that he or she has responsibilities as a consumer. The consumer has a responsibility to let companies and businesses know when he or she is unhappy with their products and services. Making one's voice heard is the best way to ensure one's future satisfaction.



THIS LOVELY FRENCH QUARTER KITCHEN features the GE Monogram line of appliances and has many of today's most popular design features: Double sink with matching faucet, built-in appliances which almost disappear into the woodwork and "white-on-white" designer styling.

Benjamin Moore is expanding

While other paint companies are closing their plants in Canada and moving to the United States rather than invest in upgrading domestic facilities, Benjamin Moore and Co. Limited, our supplier and one of Canada's oldest paint companies, sees a bright future for the Canadian market.

The company is currently building a 40,000 square foot paint manufacturing plant in Langley, B.C. to replace their smaller plant in Burnaby, which could no longer keep up with customer demand. The new facility will feature the very latest in manufacturing equipment, safety and environmental protection technology which will meet the anticipated growth in the Alberta and B.C. markets.

In addition to the western plant, Benjamin Moore is building a plant in Burlington, Ontario, to supply resins for their industrial coatings and consumer paint manufacturing operations. Approvals were received from all regulatory agencies of each level of government prior to the start of construction

and this state of the art unit will be equipped with advanced safety and environmental protection features. Both facilities will begin production this year at a projected cost of \$10,000,000.

Moreover, Benjamin Moore recently received approval from both the Federal Government and the Canadian Standards Association to carry the Environmental Choice or "EcoLogo" on all of their water-based paints. To be able to carry this logo, all products had to meet the exacting standards set by Environment Canada and the CSA.

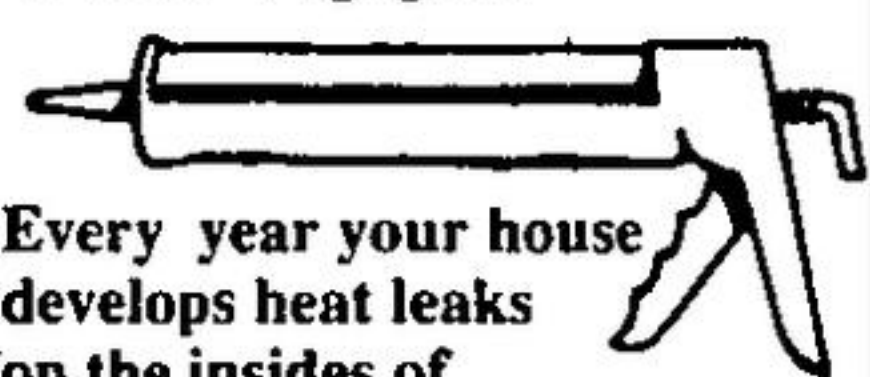
The company, headquartered in Toronto, has manufacturing and distribution facilities in Vancouver, Toronto, Burlington and Montreal, plus distribution centres in St. John's, Dartmouth, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton. Benjamin Moore has been manufacturing paint since 1883 and was established in Canada in 1906.



DECKS, RAILINGS and other exterior structures built with pressure-treated wood need waterproofing to prevent moisture damage like warping, splitting and cracking. Protect your investment with the proper care and you can maintain its beauty and durability for years to come.

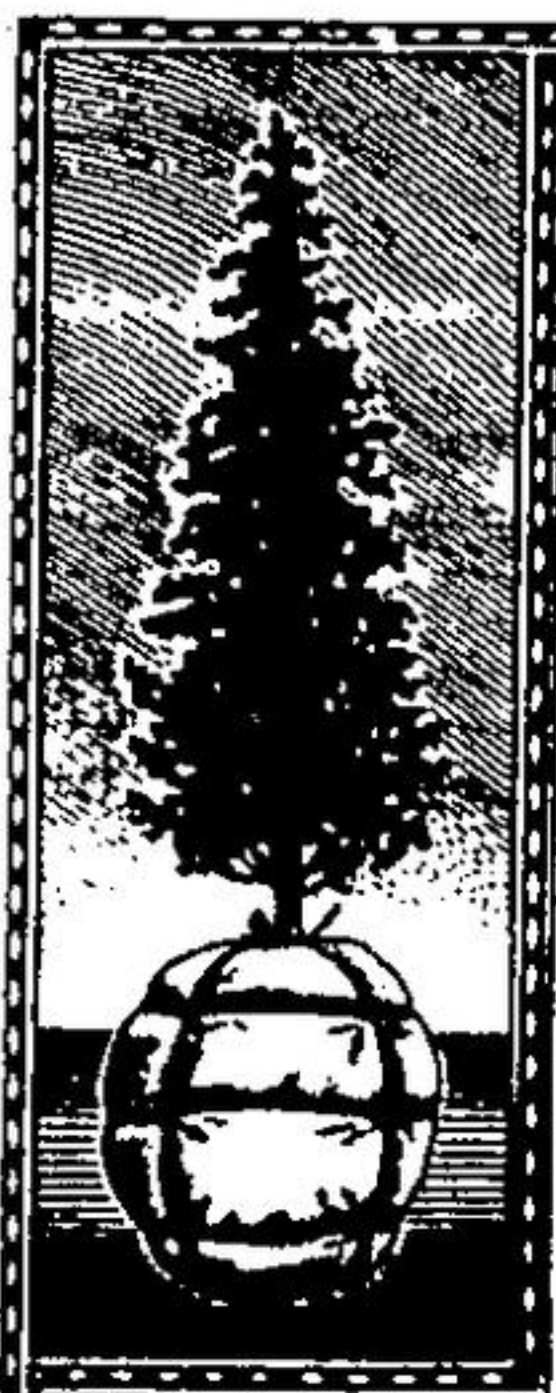
ICG HOME COMFORT TIPS

Troubleshoot with a caulking gun



Every year your house develops heat leaks on the insides of window frames. A caulking gun can shoot down excess heating costs.

PLUG IN



GARDENING TIPS FROM YOUR HYDRO COMPANY.

Here are some tips for gardeners thinking of planting trees this year. Tips that may save a tree's life, and indeed your own life. Before you decide on the location of your new trees, take a moment to consider how big they will be when they mature. Be sure that they won't grow up to interfere with overhead lines. If you have trees that are already growing among

power lines, call your hydro. We'll prune them, neatly and safely at no charge to you. And if you're digging a large hole to plant a mature tree, please call before you dig so that you don't accidentally hit an underground line. Happy gardening from your hydro company.



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ENERGY HINTS

Laundry For Less

Clothes Washer
With today's synthetic materials and laundry detergents you can wash clothes in warm or cold water and rinse in cold. If your washing machine has a small load attachment and water level controls - why not use them!

Clothes Dryer
Avoid over-loading. Drying one full load will take less energy than two small loads. And remember, over drying wastes energy and isn't good for your clothes either!

For more free energy tips on heating, cooling, appliances, lighting and much, much more, just drop by our office today. Ask for your FREE Energy Tips Package!

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