

# Protecting your home from winter's icy clutches

Pretty soon the last leaves of autumn will have made their way into the composting bin, it'll be time once again to turn your thoughts to protecting your home from the icy grasp of winter. After all, you want your home to provide the maximum amount of warmth and comfort at a reasonable cost. By doing a few relatively simple things in and around your home now, before the real deep freeze sets in, you can avoid unpleasant surprises down the road — and possibly reduce your heating costs at the same time. Reducing drafts and heat loss by caulking and weatherstripping for instance, can have a major impact on the energy efficiency of your home.

## Test windows and doors

To see if your home could use some reinforcement, try testing your doors and windows to see how they stand up. Take a feather or a piece of tissue paper and hold it around the edges of your doors and windows. If you detect movement in the feather or tissue, chances are you're losing some heat through poor seals or cracks. And this, of course, translates directly into higher heating bills. If you find you have leaks, the situation can usually be easily remedied by applying some caulking or weatherstripping around the edges of your windows or doors. Or, if you find you have a draft blowing in beneath your door, consider installing a doorsweep.

## Consult experts

To find out which type of remedy is best for your particular situation, try talking to the experts at your local hardware or building supply store. They should be able to recommend a suitable product. Also try consulting some home maintenance books, or publications put out by the government and government-related agencies. You can also consider installing temporary storm windows. Available in kits, these are made of plastic which shrinks to fit your window frame when you apply the heat of a hair dryer.

If cost isn't a major concern, you may even want to consider installing some new windows or a new door. For windows in particular, you may also want to consider installing some of the insulating window coverings now available on the market.

## Attic

Also check your attic to see if your insulation needs topping up. Old insulation can become damp from condensation and worn down, thereby losing its effectiveness. By topping it up or replacing it altogether, you should see a noticeable improvement. You can do this yourself or hire an expert. Either way, make sure you use products that are approved and highly rated for their insulation value. If you're a "do-it-yourselfer," make sure you take the necessary precautions.

## Walls

If you have an older home with very little insulation in the walls, you know the effect that a good strong wind can have on your home — it feels like someone left a window open. To remedy the situation, you may want to consider having insulation blown in from the outside. Be sure to shop around before making your final decision and find out as much about available products as you can.

While checking your house, also make sure you take a good look at your basement. Check for any cracks or holes in the walls and inspect window openings for a loose fit.

By taking these simple precautionary measures, you can help protect your home from the worst winter has to offer — and save a little extra money at the same time.

*This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.*

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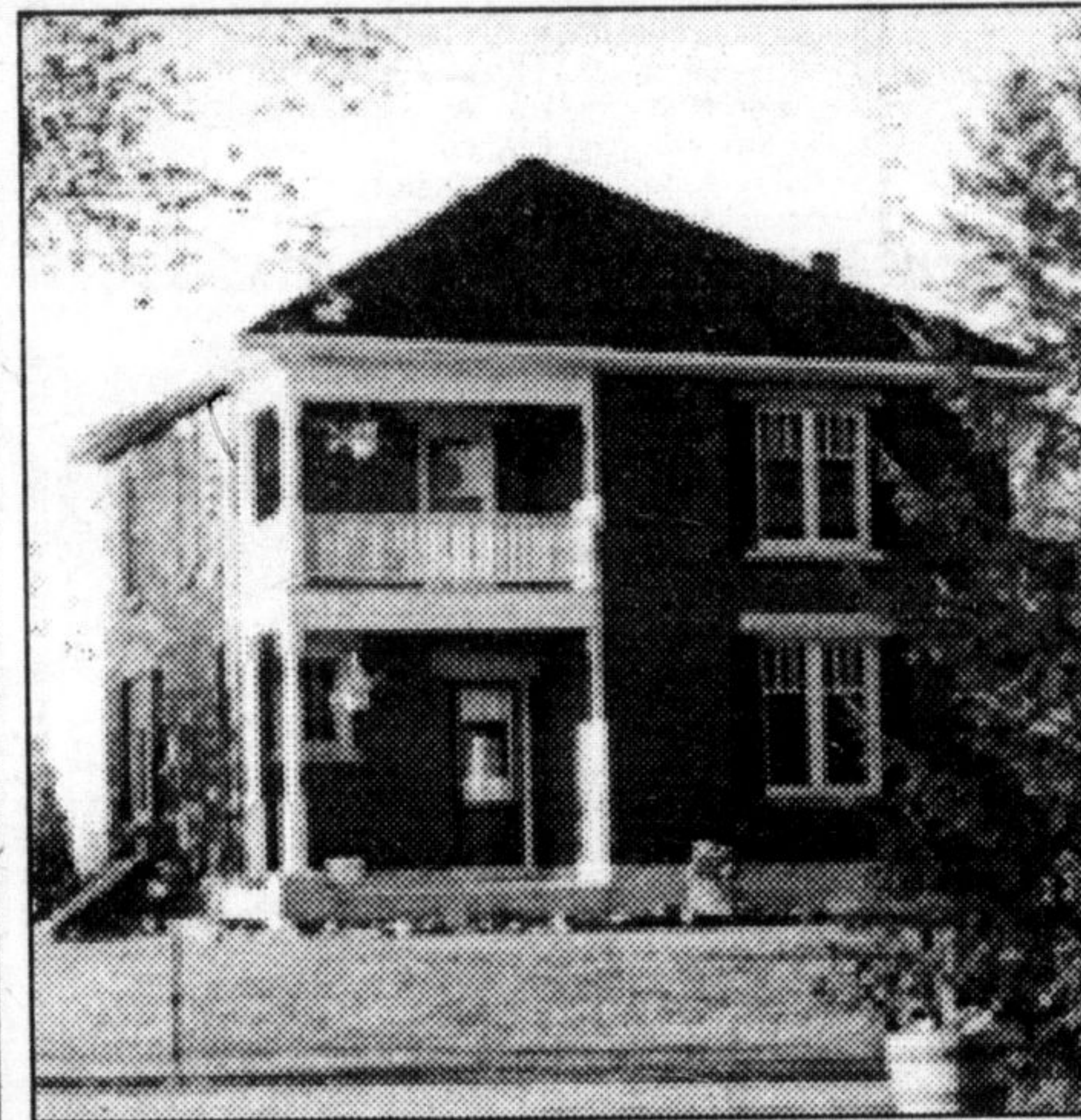
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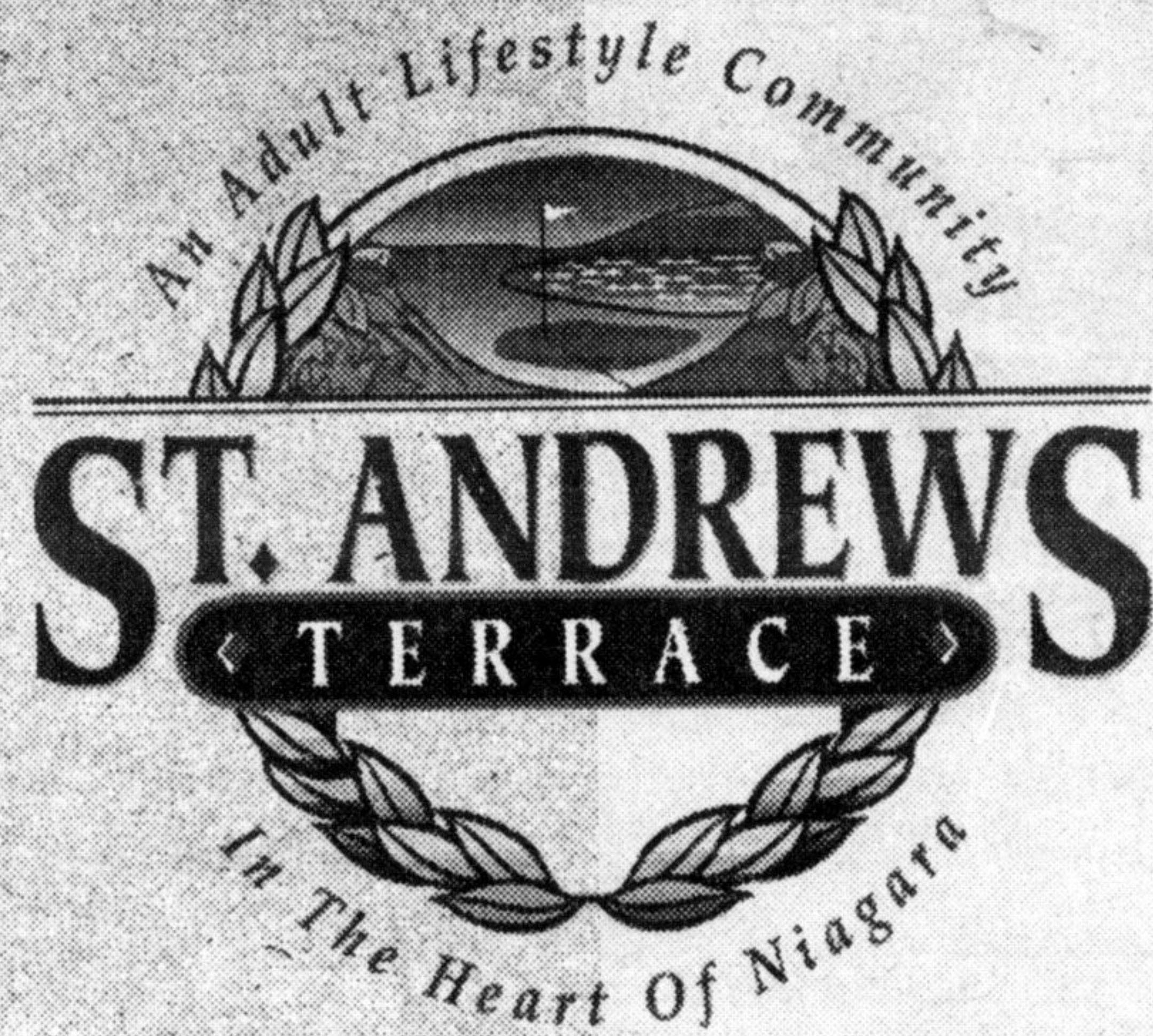
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