

Check energy features when buying a house

Just because a house is brand new does not mean it is energy efficient. A buyer cannot assume that regulations and building codes ensure maximum energy efficiency.

Over half of your energy expenses in the home go to space heating (and sometimes cooling). Some of those dollars are wasted because of heat loss through walls, ceilings, basements, windows, and doors and plain and simple air escape. Your examination of a new house should focus on these two aspects—ensuring that you have efficient heating devices and cutting your losses.

Running down a simple energy checklist before you buy can alert you to energy wasting features in a home. Looking for energy efficient features can cut down on energy costs as long as you own the house.

The Ontario Ministry of Energy, together with the Housing and Urban Development Association of Canada, has compiled a list of 14 features for new home buyers to look for in judging the energy conservation qualities of a new home. Eight are labelled major features no home should be without. The other six are good extras to consider.

The most most important features are the quality of the air/vapour barrier, the level of insulation, the use of insulation where the wall joins the ceiling, effective caulking and weatherstripping, storm windows and doors, efficient space heating and

domestic hot water equipment, and an energy-conscious layout.

The air/vapour barrier quality, insulation levels, and efficiency of space and hot water equipment are more difficult than the others to assess on your own. But, with the builder's help, you can determine their conservation capabilities.

Let's take the more important features in order and see what you might look for.

The air/vapour barrier is a thin sheet of air-tight film between the insulation and the warm side of outside walls and ceilings. In a finished home, this will not be visible. You might ask the builder if the sheets of polyethylene used are at least 15 mil. thick, and if they overlap and are properly sealed at all the openings.

A good quality, well-sealed air/vapour barrier is essential to prevent deterioration of your insulation due to moisture leakage from the warm, moist air inside. Remember that this is nearly impossible to install after construction is complete.

Enough insulation in the walls, ceilings or attics, crawl space or on basement walls and in floors over unheated spaces is mandatory in a new house. The R-value you need will depend on the climate and your own judgement, but you should know what is provided.

And the future is worth considering. Minimum building code standards for insulation are expected to rise.

One place you can see the insulation for yourself is in the attic. Examine the insulation level through the attic access hatch. In particular, check for attic ventilation to the outside, even application of insulation and tight seals around ducts, flues and chimneys.

Ask the builder if the area around the perimeter of each floor has been insulated. It has been a favorite spot to pass over in the past because of the extra labor cost. You can check for this yourself in the basement between the floor joists.

Caulking and weatherstripping are visible and easily examined. Look for cracks or gaps in caulking and examine weatherstripping on movable parts for durability.

A builder should be able to provide energy use and cost information based on experience or estimates for both the heating and hot water equipment. Consider the more efficient condensing gas furnaces now available, and if you require cooling equipment, at the same time, perhaps a heat pump.

The hot water tank accounts for about 20 per cent of your domestic energy dollar. If it is electric, make sure it has a Canadian Standards Association performance certification and that it has 76 mm of insulation around it.

Examine the layout for energy planning. Does the house take advantage of the heating benefits of

south facing windows? Buffers like storage areas or vestibules might be put on the north side to protect against winter winds. Heated spaces over garages can lose energy through the floor. By the time you have asked the builder about these features, he will be impressed with your knowledge of energy saving features.

But there is still more. Six extras worth looking for are careful lighting, insulated ducts, efficient fireplaces and appliances or a set-back thermostat (one that automatically turns itself down at night). Other newer developments worth checking are thermal shutters and air-to-air heat exchangers.

Ask the builder for previous energy cost information. If the house model has been in use for some time, he will have reliable estimates for similar sizes and types which can help in your overall evaluation.

It is estimated that better insulation, greater air tightness and a more efficient gas furnace can easily save \$120 a year in heating bills for a Toronto bungalow.

As well as the cost savings, the new home buyer should weigh the added comfort and possible higher resale value resulting from an energy efficient home.

For further information send for the booklet *Buying Your Energy-Efficient New Home*. Write to the Ministry of Energy, GMS, Box 37, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 2B7.

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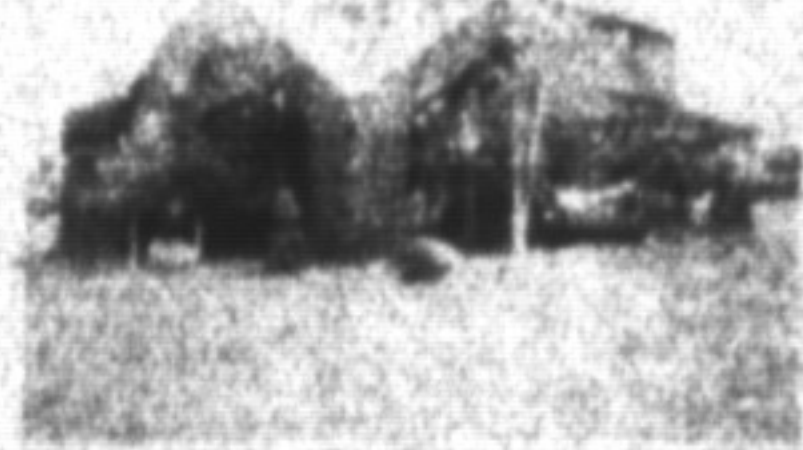
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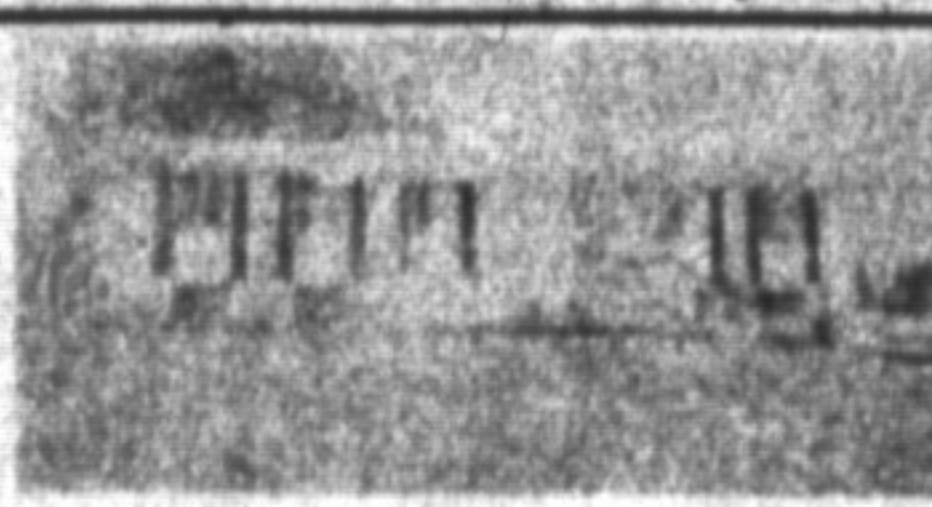


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\$74,900.00, then please look this one over. 3 bedrooms, separate dining room and a large lot. Please ask for Stewart Haddon. 439/2



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Only minutes North of Milton on Highway No. 25, on a 1/2 acre lot with an Escarpment view. Six year-old 2 storey with open concept layout featuring 3 bedrooms, 3 washrooms, 5 walkouts, oversized double garage, plus many built-in features. Priced at \$144,900.00. Please call Dick to arrange a personal inspection. 488/4

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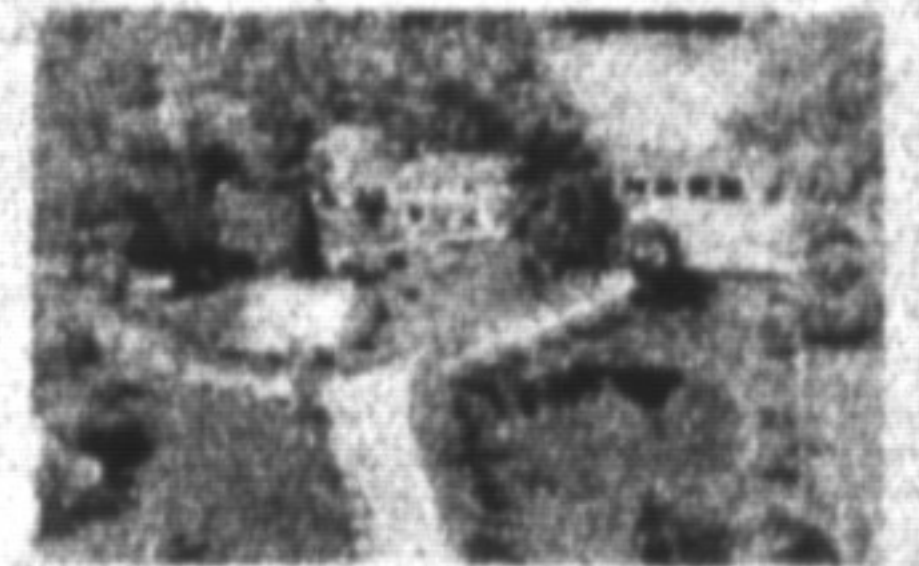


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Beautiful 10 acre country home. Main house, 4 bedroom, raised ranch bungalow, upgraded carpeting throughout, finished rec. room, 2-4 piece baths, walkout from living room to deck, 2 woodburning stoves, and much more. In-law house on same property has two bedrooms, 1-3 piece bath and barn. Minutes to Milton, must be seen. Call Lynn Wardle. 508/4

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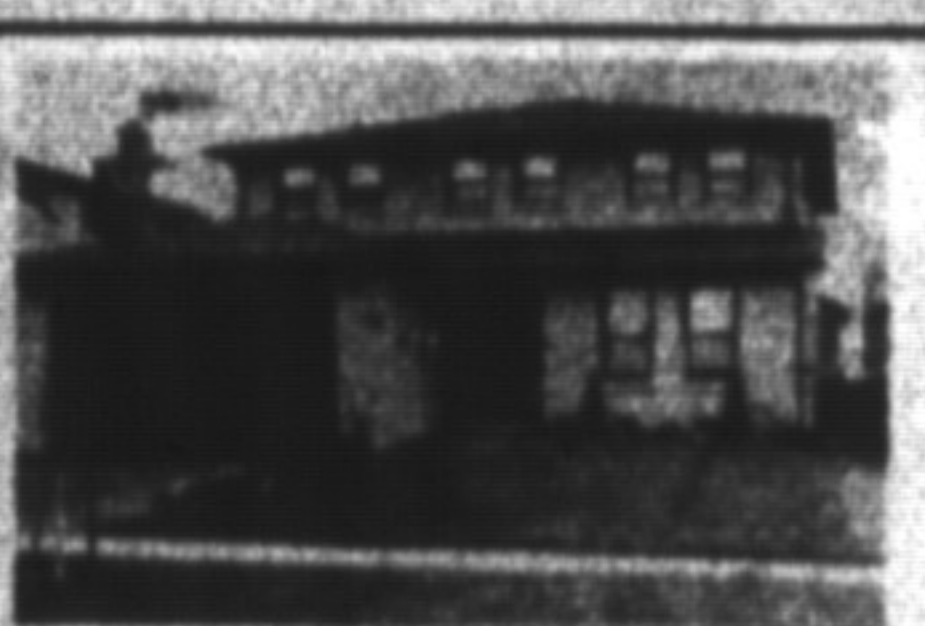


ACREAGE
18 Mile Creek, 202 acres of gentle sloping land with farmhouse, 2 barns, 2 sheds. Property is divided by 16 Mile Creek and has 3 frontages. Ideal site for country or golf club. Call Tony for more details. 495/4

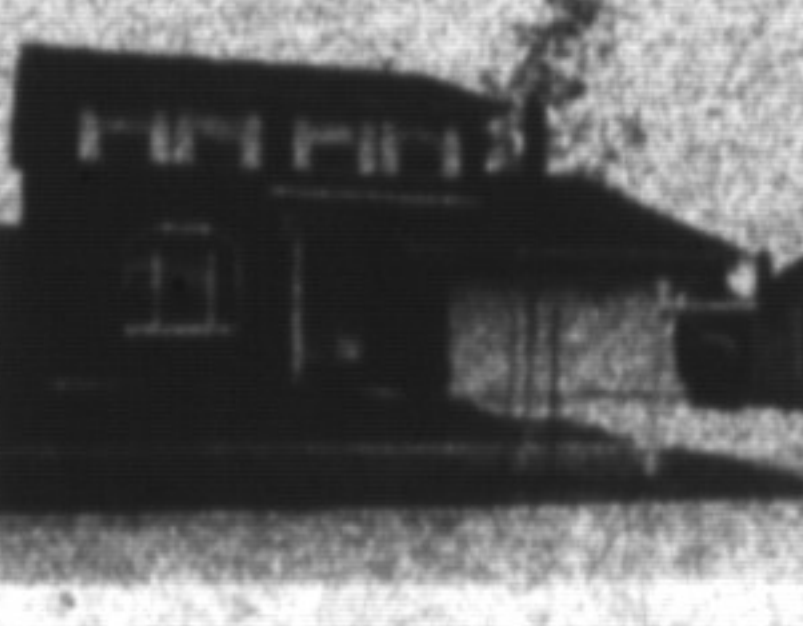


THE COUNTRY ESTATE
10 acres, minutes to Hwy. 25 and 401, stalls and paddock for your horses, prestigious, paved, tree lined driveway with a pond to the right. Lots of goodies in this home and a 5 car garage as well. Please ask for Stewart Haddon. 477/4

\$100,000 to \$150,000



MAKE AN OFFER
This gorgeous 4 bedroom home features a curved oak staircase, large kitchen, main floor family room with fireplace, walkout and so much more. Only \$129,900.00. Call Scott. 451/2



CLEANER THAN NEW
If that is possible. Listed at only \$107,900.00. Owner moving. Heat pump advantage, central vacuum, 4 bedrooms, fenced yard and more. Please ask for Stewart Haddon. 488/2



COUNTRY CONVENIENCE
Listed \$139,900.00. This has nearly 1 acre, a barn that would make a good workshop, 4 good bedrooms, living room-dining room combination (L-shaped) with hardwood floors and a fireplace and lots more. Close to Trafalgar Road. Please ask for Stewart Haddon. 464/4



COME SEE WITH ME...
these 10 gorgeous acres of trees and privacy with large brick bungalow with 2 fireplaces, 2 baths, garage and a walkout from the basement. Asking \$214,000.00. Call Freda Lawrence. 487/4



ENGLISH STYLE TUDOR
For the executive. Approximately 4000 square feet, 5 bedrooms, main floor family room with wet bar and dance area, 2 fireplaces, formal (separate) dining room with marble fireplace and lots more features that appeal. Please ask for Stewart Haddon. 493/4



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