

Make the most of your windows as the sun shines in

By Louise Rachlis, Citizen Special May 13, 2010

Opening windows in the summer costs nothing, but it can save a lot of energy and money.

Consider keeping your windows open in the evening and overnight to allow cooler air into your home, and don't forget to turn off your air conditioner. Close the windows during the day to keep the cool air in and the warm air out.

And you want to be proud to fling back the curtains and show off your windows with pride. Spring is the time to consider upgrading the windows in your home to high efficiency windows with low-e coatings, argon gas fill and insulated spacers. Here's some advice from the window experts:

"The seals on the outside of the windows and the caulking is important," says Greg Westwell, president of Fendor Glass & Aluminum, which supplies and installs windows. "The new glass is a lot more efficient than the old glass used to be, but you're still looking at an R-value of 3 or 4 - so it's important that the window seals itself properly. By the time you start getting into weathering, the labour cost can reach the price of a new window. Sometimes it's a good idea to upgrade rather than keep doing maintenance."

He says sometimes just maintenance isn't cost effective. "If you can do that yourself, it's not too bad, but if you need someone to do it, you might be better off - depending on the number of windows and the age of the window - to put the money into new windows."

Fendor will discuss with customers what's required to bring their windows up to date. Window Medics International Inc. perfected the technology and developed a complete window restoration process, simply known as "The Solution." In 2004, Michael Joasil created Window Medics which pioneered the process globally.

The Window Medics window restoration process removes visible moisture that has accumulated in a window system over time due to solar pumping, as well as dried out saturated silica desiccant materials in the window cavity.

"We advise that as soon as you see some visible moisture in your window, you lose your R-value," says Michael Joasil. The R-value is a measure of thermal resistance used in the building and construction industry. "If you give us a call, we can restore the window to its original R-value state."

If you wait, there are minerals in the water. Once they start drying out, they stain the glass and it's too late to fix it. It's a 50/50, sometimes we can get the stain out and sometimes we can't, depending on how long it's been sitting on the window."

He adds that the process is also better for the environment, keeping the old windows out of landfill. Window Medics International has rescued, at great savings to the owner and the environment, over two hundred thousand thermal pane windows that otherwise would have had to have been replaced.

And don't forget the difference the right blinds can make.

"Windows are the weakest link in any building, with the greatest source of heat loss and heat gain attributed directly to windows," says Diana Livshits, owner of Krumpers Solar Blinds, which help reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 40 per cent.

"We insulate on walls, we insulate on roofs, why not the windows, which are the greatest of heat loss and heat gain?" she asks.

"Our blinds have an equivalent R rating of 10. Our products while insulating the windows, still enable them to do what they are supposed to do - let in the light."

Krumpers Solar Blinds are a unique Canadian product, which allow for an unobstructed view while the dual modular design allows for winter/summer climate control. One side is solar reflective and one side is solar absorptive.

Ms. Livshits has heard from condo owners who have paid a premium price for the view and then, when they move in, the elements are so harsh that they have to cover it up. "Our product enables them to enjoy it and still have the climate control."

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