



Five insulation questions to ask your realtor when house-hunting

Don't let old, inefficient building envelopes affect your monthly heating and cooling bills

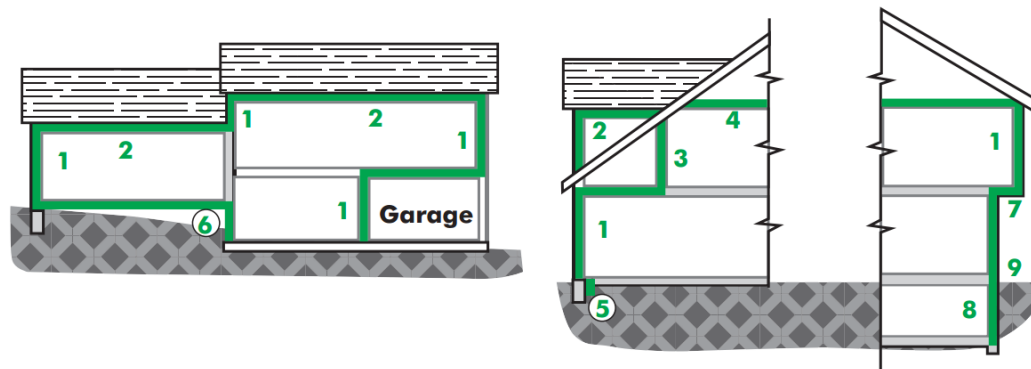
(Ottawa, ON, July 21, 2015) Knowing about a home's insulation is an important part of assessing how much energy your new purchase will consume, and should be considered before making such a big investment. While a first step is to examine the heating and cooling bills over a three-year period, the next step should involve working with your realtor and exploring the following questions to ascertain whether you desire the house under consideration that will provide you with comfort and cost savings.

1. ***Was this house built under an energy efficient home program?*** Programs such as R-2000, LEED®, GreenHouse®, and Energy Star® provide labels for homes that have been built or renovated according to standards which either met or exceeded building code requirements. The label can provide you with confidence that the home was insulated and has a better building envelope than most other homes built in the same time period. Some homes even have inscribed bricks or plaques indicating they were built in accordance with a specific program.
2. ***Has a home energy audit been undertaken?*** Home energy audits are relatively inexpensive and provide suggestions on which energy efficiency upgrades would help reduce the home's energy consumption. Even if the previous homeowners have not done the suggested work, the audit report is a useful tool to assess what energy efficiency work can be undertaken. Incentive programs offered by local governments and utility companies help leverage the costs of retrofitting and upgrading insulation. Ask your real estate agent if they have any energy efficiency audit paperwork.
3. ***Do thermographic images accurately demonstrate a home's heat loss through the building envelope?*** Inexpensive add-ons to smart phones can give you passable results and are less than \$100. They provide a quick and easy way to get a "snapshot" of the cold spots and distribution of insulation in your house.
4. ***What kind of insulation was used?*** The type of insulation used can impact your health and comfort. For years, a UFFI (Urea Formaldehyde Foam Insulation) foam rider appeared on real estate purchase offers and is now considered a health hazard. Some older homes contain vermiculite insulation, which was used into the early 1970s and is also coming under increased scrutiny as a health hazard. Meanwhile, fibre glass, rock wool, and slag wool insulation improve the comfort of your home by providing excellent thermal and acoustic resistance and also exhibits fire retardant properties not found in all insulation products.

5. **How much insulation is enough?** One simple test is to look in the attic. If you can see the top of the rafters on the attic floor, you will need more insulation. Because the attic is an area that is very easy to insulate, it's not unreasonable to assume that if this area is substandard, then other areas of the home are likely to have the same problem.

Insulation has been identified as a cost effective way to save energy and its benefits include keeping the heat outside in summer and inside in the winter.

Common locations of insulation in an energy efficient home



1. Exterior walls. Sections sometimes overlooked are walls between living spaces and unheated garages or storage rooms, dormer walls, and the portions of walls above ceilings of adjacent lower sections of split-level homes.
2. Ceilings with cold spaces above, including dormer ceilings.
3. Knee walls of attic spaces finished as living quarters.
4. Sloped walls and ceilings of attic spaces finished as living quarters.
5. Perimeters of slabs on grade.
6. Floors above vented crawlspaces. Insulation may also be placed on crawlspace floors and walls.
7. Floors over unheated or open spaces such as over garages or porches. Floors over unheated basements. The cantilevered portions of floors.
8. Basement walls.
9. Band or header joists, the wall sections at floor levels.
10. Interior walls, ceilings and floors where sound control is desired, (not shown).

For more information on high performing building envelopes and expert tips on how to give yourself peace of mind during the winter months, visit naimacanada.ca.

For more information or to schedule interviews, contact Tara McClinchey, NAIMA Canada: (613) 232-8093 or TMcClinchey@naimacanada.ca.

NAIMA Canada promotes energy efficiency and environmental preservation through the use of fibre glass, rock wool, and slag wool insulation, and encourages the safe production and use of these materials. NAIMA Canada members used more than 136 million kilograms of recycled material in the production of their mineral fibre products in 2014.