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Spring Clean and Save Energy

We generally think that Fall is the time for becoming more energy efficient, but environmentally speaking, Spring is just as important. So over the next few weeks, as spring-cleaning fever kicks in, we should be aware of the many things we can do this time of year to reduce our impact on climate change.

Let's start with transportation:

- No more excuses about bad weather – get out there and walk or bike to work and the store!
- Been a while since you checked your tire pressure? This weekend might be a good time. Correct tire pressure can help you save up to 5% on your fuel costs, and taking off your winter tires will help even more.

In your home maybe there are a few things you didn't get done last fall in terms of reducing your energy consumption for the long term? Now is good time to do some of those basic things:

- Install a programmable thermostat. Particularly if you have central heating and air conditioning as you can set the temperature for summer to a comfortable setting that will be maintained (hint: if you have to wear a sweater in your house in the summer your air conditioning needs to be set to a more moderate setting). Installing ceiling fans can also reduce your energy costs as you may find you need to run your air conditioner less frequently.
- Clean all ducts, screens, and filters in your central heating/cooling system; room air conditioners; and in your heat recovery and ventilation (HRV) system.
- Check all the sinks in your home – are there any leaky faucets? If so, you are just pouring water and money down the drain. Neither is good!
- Have you installed low flow showerheads and low flow faucet aerators yet? If not, next time you are at the hardware store – pick some up. They help you save money on your water bill.
- Feel like really making a difference in your energy use? Install a solar hot water heater – you will never have to pay for hot water again! Check out www.ips-nb.com for more information.

Now for appliances. Spring is always a good time to clean our appliances and most often this is the time of year people are renovating and purchasing new appliances for kitchens.

- Perhaps you may have seen the David Suzuki public service commercial where he is hanging out in someone's basement alerting them to the fact that the big old 'beer' fridge in the basement (or garage) is using a pile of power. Do have an old relic like this? There is a good chance it is costing you up to \$100 annually to operate!

- During spring-cleaning remember to clean the coils on the back of the refrigerator Dirty coils are costing you money by reducing the efficiency of your refrigerator.
- It is typical during Canadian winters that we use our clothes dryer more than our clothesline - perhaps due to the 3 feet of snow in the back yard! Well – now it's time to start using the clothesline and reduce our dryer usage drastically. And while you are hanging out in your laundry room – clean your dryer lint screen and the outdoor vent to maximize efficiency when you do have to use your dryer.

As you can see, becoming more energy efficient is a year-round process! I urge you to take some of these energy-saving steps this spring and summer – I guarantee that you will reduce your carbon footprint and save money.

Peter Corbyn was awarded the 2007 National Clean Air Day Award for Excellence in Energy Efficiency Outreach. He is also a Board member of The Climate Project – Canada, and a founder of www.earthinstitute.ca a not-for-profit organization that provides tools to help Canadian home owners, small businesses and large enterprises save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.