

# Make your home cosy and efficient this winter

(NC) As the seasons change but before it gets too cold, there is no better time to inspect your house from top to bottom to identify places where you could be wasting energy. Check for drafty windows and doors that you can easily seal with caulking and weather-stripping. Next, make sure that your home is insulated at the recommended R-value or thermal value for your area.

Insufficient insulation in unheated garages, basements and attics allows heat to escape, leaving you with chilly living spaces and hefty monthly heating bills. Start in the attic. If you can see the tops of the ceiling joists when you look in your attic, then it is wise to add more insulation. Blown-in loose insulation is the best choice for attics because it fills many hard-to-reach spaces and provides excellent protection from air leakage.

"Heat constantly moves to colder areas, which is why homes need insulating power between the indoors and outdoors," explains Kate Campbell, a celebrity carpenter and media personality. "Loose, blown-in attic insulation such as CertainTeed TrueComfort or InsulSafe XC, helps to prevent warm air from rising to the roof and creating ice accumulations along eaves and gutters that can cause roof damage. It can be installed in your attic in less than a day and will immediately improve your indoor comfort and save energy."

When selecting insulation, Campbell says homeowners need to do their homework. Choose a loose blown-in material that doesn't settle so that its thermal performance is not reduced. This measure will also prevent the need to top it up every couple of years. She also suggests looking for insulation products that are noncombustible, odour free and that don't contain chemicals.

Additional information is available at [certainteed.com/insulation](http://certainteed.com/insulation).



While hardwood or laminate flooring is perfect for some projects, one of Jo's favourite elements to work with is natural stone. It's environmentally friendly, easy to care for, durable, and adds a unique feature to any space. L-R: Nuheat dryfitting mat and Wi-Fi-enabled thermostat; Concrobium Mold Control; Natural stone fireplace surround



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## 5 things a designer can help you with (that you may not have known)

**T**he major misconception I get when working with clients is that a designer's main focus is making things "pretty."

Sure, that is one element we focus on, but even more importantly we want to make sure a home is safe and efficient so the homeowner can enjoy it visually and rest at ease knowing it is structurally sound as well as designed utilizing space effectively. Here are the top five things I often help homeowners with that might not have crossed your mind (but should) when hiring a designer.

**Mould:** Unfortunately, mould makes its way into the nooks and crannies of many homes. Basements and bathrooms are the prime spots for mould to grow, as is any other location prone to moisture. A good designer will demand every bit of it is fully removed before carrying on with any project. As soon as mould is found, the space should be sealed off to prevent the spread of spores.

Many of my clients have animals or small children, so I always turn to products that are safe for kids and pets. One of my favourites is Concrobium Mold Control ([concrobium.com](http://concrobium.com)). It's a bleach free, Health Canada-registered non-toxic solution that's safe to use even with kids and pets around. You can either hire a professional to remove the mould, but this product is so simple that many of the homeowners I work with do it themselves. All you need to do is rent a machine called a Fogger from The Home Depot tool rental department ([homedepot.ca](http://homedepot.ca)), add a jug of Concrobium and mist the space. It will kill the mould and leave an invisible antimicrobial shield to prevent it from returning. This product is so safe that youngsters and furry family members can be in the house as the process is completed.

**Insulation:** You might not think this is something your designer can help you with, but think again. Ensuring proper materials are used from the inside out should be a priority — especially so if you've had to remove mould.

You want to ensure it does not return, which is why I lean towards materials that will help ensure a mould-free home.

Certainteed offers a great product called Membrain ([certainteed.com](http://certainteed.com)) that prevents moisture and air. It's also designed to help wall cavities breathe and stay dry by allowing any dampness to escape. In the winter, it adapts to humidity levels to prevent vapour from entering the wall cavity and in summer, it prevents moisture build-up. Another thing I love about this company is that their products are sustainable — a key factor for companies I choose to partner with. Their insulation is made with recycled and renewable content, including a plant-based binder that is formaldehyde-free and contains no harsh acrylics, dyes or unnecessary chemicals.

**Windows and doors:** Another key factor in a demolition renovation is choosing windows and doors that fit not only the style, but the family's functionality. Are there small children to consider? Should the windows open inward or outward? Are there safety features and are there cleaning concerns?

I recently discovered a Canadian company that makes, manufactures, delivers and installs windows and doors in sometimes as two-weeks (this is fantastic when working on tight designer deadlines). Total Home Window and Doors ([thwindowsdoors.com](http://thwindowsdoors.com)) is one of the largest window and door replacement companies in Canada and they offer a lifetime warranty on their products. This is a company I can stand behind, with the added bonus of making my clients feel protected for years to come.

**Flooring:** With so many colours, styles, textures, patterns, and materials, flooring is essential to get designer input on. It's labour-intensive to install and not something you can — or want to — switch-up every couple years. You really want to make sure you pick a material, colour and pattern that you can live with and love for years to come. While hardwood or laminate is perfect for some projects, one of my favourite elements to work

with is natural stone. It's environmentally friendly, easy to care for, durable, and adds a unique feature to any space.

On a recent project, I worked with ErthCOVERINGS ([erthcoverings.com](http://erthcoverings.com)), a company that offers natural stone flooring and wall coverings. A new trend in feature walls is to add stone veneer to one wall within the space. I love that I can mix and match the floor and wall options to create a sharp design with a feature wall that is truly unique.

**Heat:** I get asked all the time about heating options, and especially so for older homes. Typical questions deal with the most economical selection, how to cut down on heating bills, and how to choose the right option within the room.

One luxurious-feeling option I love is in-floor heating. Surprisingly, it's much more economical than most people think. You can install electric radiant floor heating under tile, stone and laminate/engineered wood floors.

Nuheat ([nuheat.com](http://nuheat.com)) makes custom mats — like electric blankets — that perfectly fit the areas you would like to heat. It's worth noting that Nuheat provides 12-watts per square-foot, so it can in some instances replace costly baseboard heaters. Another great feature from Nuheat is a Wi-Fi-enabled thermostat, allowing you to control your heating from a free app on your smartphone. When you head out of town or are coming back from a long trip, you can adjust it remotely. You can also monitor your usage so you know where your bill is going hourly, weekly and monthly and modify it as needed.

While you may feel you can tackle any or all of these areas on your own, a designer's input can be invaluable. Designers are educated on all your options, know of recent developments and new product introductions, and have more than just the final look in mind. Work with a designer to get the practicalities right ... and then we'll make it look pretty, too!

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