

A WINTER READY HOME CHECK LIST



With the colder weather officially on the horizon, it's time to shift our focus from summer patio nights to essential home winterization.

In Ontario, our freeze-thaw cycles can be incredibly tough on a property. Taking a few proactive steps now can save you thousands of dollars in unexpected repairs—and keep your utility bills in check over the coming months.

To make things easy, we have put together a quick, month-by-month checklist of exactly what you need to do between now and the first major snowfall to protect your investment. From draining your outdoor hose bibs to optimizing your furnace, we've got you covered.

Take a look at the checklist below to see what should be on your radar in the coming months!

SEPTEMBER: Interior Efficiency & Preparation

- **Test & Service the Furnace:** Turn your thermostat to "Heat" on a milder day to ensure it fires up normally. Book an HVAC technician for a seasonal tune-up to inspect the heat exchanger for cracks and clean the system before peak season.
- **Replace the Furnace Filter:** Put in a fresh filter before the heavy heating season starts. Change or clean it every 30 to 90 days depending on your household (pets, dust levels, etc.) to keep utility bills down.
- **Service the HRV & Humidifier:** Clean the filters on your Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV). Clean out your furnace humidifier panel to prevent mold and scale buildup before it starts running.
- **Test Safety Detectors:** Test every smoke and carbon monoxide detector in your home and replace old batteries. Winter is peak season for fires and carbon monoxide issues with windows sealed tight.

OCTOBER: Exterior Defenses

- **Clean Gutters and Eavestroughs:** Scoop out all fallen leaves, twigs, and debris. Clogged gutters cause melting snow to back up under your shingles, leading to ice dams that can leak into your ceilings.
- **Extend Downspouts:** Ensure downspout extensions are securely attached and directing water at least 1.5 to 2 metres away from your foundation.
- **Blow Out Sprinkler Systems:** Hire a professional to blow compressed air through your underground irrigation lines. Leaving even a small amount of water in plastic pipes will cause them to crack when the Ontario soil freezes.
- **Clean & Store Patio Furniture:** Wash down outdoor tables and chairs. Store cushions indoors, and move lightweight aluminum, plastic, or wicker furniture into a shed or garage to prevent brittle cracking.
- **Winterize the Lawn Mower:** Drain the remaining gas from your mower or add a fuel stabilizer to the tank before running it for a few minutes. Stale gas left in the engine gums up the carburetor.

NOVEMBER: Final Freeze Prep

- **Drain Outdoor Hose Bibs:** Disconnect all garden hoses. Shut off the indoor water valve connected to the outdoor faucets, then go outside and open the spigot completely to drain any remaining water so pipes don't burst inside your walls.
- **Check Weatherstripping & Caulking:** Inspect the seals around all exterior doors and windows. Replace worn weatherstripping or apply a fresh bead of exterior caulk if you feel a draft.
- **Keep Vents Clear:** Locate your furnace exhaust, hot water tank vents, and dryer vents on the exterior of your house. Ensure they are clear of debris now, and keep them clear of snow drifts all winter long.
- **Protect Vulnerable Landscaping:** Wrap delicate shrubs, young trees, and evergreens (like cedar or boxwood) in burlap to protect against heavy snow loads and salt spray. Put guards around tree bases to stop winter rodents from chewing bark.
- **Prep Snow Removal Tools:** Pull out your shovels, buy pet-safe ice melt, and fire up your snowblower now to ensure it starts smoothly before the first major lake-effect snowfall hits.

Keep in mind that every home is different and might need a little extra care depending on its features. This list is meant to be a helpful guide, but please don't hesitate to call in the pros! We always suggest consulting a professional for things like pool closings, cabana winterization, or any project you aren't comfortable tackling yourself.

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