High Bill Inquiry - Analysis

Have there been major changes or renovations to your home recently?
If you have renovated your home and increased your living space, that will affect your heating and cooling bills. Minimize costs by using energy efficient products and techniques when you renovate.

Have there been additional people living in your home during this billing period?
Increased hot water use can substantially increase your electric bill. For example, a family of two might use 75 to 125L of hot water a day while a family of four might use 150 to 200L. Adding one or two people could increase costs significantly.

Do you use an electric water heater?
Most manufacturers recommend that you set your water heater at 60°C (140°F). This temperature provides the maximum availability of hot water. If you want to save money, set your heater to a lower temperature.

Have you converted to electric space heating?
Electric space heating can be a big part of your bill, especially in Northern Ontario, where electric heating can make up as much as 60% or more of the bill. Use electric heating with proper controls and make sure your home is insulated and sealed to minimize heat loss.

Do you use portable plug-in heaters?
Electric portable heaters are usually 1500 watts. If you run a heater continuously for 24 hours, it can add significantly to your bill - particularly if you have more than one heater.

Do you use electric baseboard heaters?
Unlike fossil burning appliances, electric baseboard heaters operate at 100% efficiency. However, it's important to clean your unit on a regular basis to allow for better heat transfer.

It is also important to ensure the pathway of these heaters is cleared. Leave a minimum of two inches between the baseboard and the curtains and the finished surface of the floor to avoid trapped heat and heat wasted through the windows. Furniture should also be kept a few inches from the baseboards to allow better circulation.

With baseboard heating, an electronic thermostat can provide increased comfort. Plus, it can help you realize up to 7% energy savings because it's more responsive to temperature change and therefore gives

you accurate control. If line voltage thermostats are already installed, consider upgrading them to electronic thermostats at least in the main living areas.

Note: Ensure baseboard heaters are turned off when not in use. Some baseboard heaters have a high/low indicator, not an on/off switch. Turn these off at the panel after the heating season.

Recommended thermostat settings:
21 °C (70°F) - when relaxing
20 °C (68°F) - when working or exercising
18 °C (64°F) - when sleeping or away during the day
16 °C (61°F) - when no one is at home for an extended period of time

Do you have any additional large appliances?
A whirlpool bath uses 409 to 1227L of hot water, which can really add to your water heating costs. A large food freezer or refrigerator/freezer can add significantly to your monthly bill - older models might cost even more to operate.

Waterbed heaters, humidifiers and dehumidifiers can also account for a surprisingly large portion of your monthly costs.

Do you use a car block heater in your vehicle?
A car block only needs to be activated for 4 hours prior to starting your car. Any more time wastes energy and costs you money.

Have you recently installed air conditioning?
An air conditioner can have a significant impact on your energy bill. Check for energy efficient cooling strategies and low-cost cooling tips.

Do you have cables that protect your water pipes from freezing?
If you have water pipe heating cables, make sure a proper thermostat operates the system. If you leave it running continuously, it can significantly increase your bill.

Products that allow use of thermal insulation on piping, and are controlled by thermostats (rather than heating cables, which can't be installed with insulation) can save you even more money.

The best solution is a self-regulating, freeze proof water supply system that provides only as much heat as needed and only in those sections of the pipe where it is required.

Do you remove eaves trough ice with heating cables?

Roof de-icing cable is designed to be plugged in and left on all winter - or plugged in as required. This product is used to prevent ice from building up on shingles, in eaves and downspouts, and can help reduce costly roof repairs. However, if the cable is on 100% of the time from November to March, it can really add up. Look for models that offer automatic controls to switch the de-icing cables off when not needed.

Do you have a swimming pool?

Pool filters consume energy based on their horsepower (hp) rating (they range from ¼ to 1.5 hp). The higher the horsepower, the more energy it uses - and the higher your bill will be. Ask your swimming pool manufacturer about adding a timer to reduce consumption of your pool filter motor.

Does your swimming pool have a heat pump?

A heat pump water heater is a small unit designed to heat water efficiently. It absorbs heat from the surrounding air, then transfers it to the water. A regular heat pump maintenance program will ensure the unit is working at its optimum capacity.