

# Warm, dry and breathing easy

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Eppo Maertens

Citizen advertising features

*Household mould has been associated with various health issues.  
Basement waterproofing can help.*

Bob Rea first developed shortness of breath and ongoing fatigue in the early 1990s, no one suspected his stone home which he moved into in 1975 had anything to do with it.

Following traditional medical advice, Dr. Rea, a doctor of psychology at Rideau Regional Centre in Smith Falls, was treated with steroid inhalers. But while the inhalers treated the symptoms, they did not seem to improve his condition. He enlisted the help of Dr. John Coombs, a Foresters Falls doctor well known in the area for his use of environmental and



natural treatments. He suggested Dr. Rea's symptoms may, in fact be triggered by environmental irritants in his home. Dr. Rea also consulted his brother who runs the Environmental Health Centre in Texas. After a series of tests, Dr. Rea's brother determined mould was a major trigger of his symptoms. "My brother worked in conjunction with Dr. Coombs for a year and a half," says Dr. Rea. "Finally, they recommended extensive environmental change related to the house."

Dr. Rea describes his stone home, located just outside of Merrickville and built in the 1800s as "fairly typical of that area and time. There's a cement floor, but the walls are stone and insulation was added much later. It's fairly damp down there and I could see mould growing on the floors, especially in the spring, and when we had a little rain I could see it seeping in."

Dr. Rea found his solution to the mould problem after tuning into Renovations 'Cross Canada, a weekly call-in show on CFRA radio. He called host Ren Molnar, who referred him to Doug Walkinshaw, president of Indoor Air Technologies. Mr. Walkinshaw did an assessment of his house and suggested, among other things, that he install an ECHO system in his basement. Pioneered by Mr. Walkinshaw, ECHO is a basement finishing system made up of ventilated subfloors and perimeter finished walls built on the inside of the foundation.

Designed to combat moisture and toxicants originating from beneath the foundation, any moisture or leaks flow down to the floor where they are exhausted by a small blower. The basement stays dry and mould doesn't have the chance to grow. And since air in the envelop is constantly ventilated, soil gases such as radon don't enter the house.

Installation of the system runs roughly between \$3,000 to \$5,000 above the cost of having a basement professionally finished. Mr. Walkinshaw says the extra cost covers the equipment and extra labour that go into making a tight well ventilated cavity that drains properly.

Following the installation of the ECHO system, Dr. Rea's basement has been finished with ceramic tile, drywall and wood trim, increasing his home's living space by 20 per cent. The temperature is maintained at the same level as the rest of the house. Absent is the dampness characteristic of typical basements and he now uses his basement like any other room of the house. But more

importantly, Dr. Rea's health has consistently improved over the past year. "I'm pretty certain that's partly due to the condition in basement," he says.

Stefan Opalski, who works for a venture capital firm also had the ECHO system installed in the basement of his 70-year-old Rockcliffe home. "We had a problem with moisture in basement," he says. "There was extensive foundation and structural woodwork damage and we had to renovate."

He had heard about the ECHO system through a friend who had had it installed a number of years before. In addition to dealing with the homes moisture problems, he wanted hardwood floors in the basement, something that is almost impossible to do without controlling moisture.

With the ECHO system he says he can now treat the basement like any other room in the house. His basement is finished with hardwood flooring and is used as a library and audiovisual room.

Without looking out of the window, you wouldn't know you were in the basement, says Mr. Opalski. There's none of the basement smell that you get even in many well-maintained basements. The system works perfectly well. We are very happy and pleased.



