

## **Cottage Closure Got You Down? Celebrate! A New Perspective on Closing the Cottage**

As fall approaches and the cool weather and shorter days arrive, cottage owners will sadly anticipate the end of cottage season. For many, shutting down their summer sanctuary is a double dose of bad news - not only do lazy days on the dock disappear but they are quickly replaced with the labour required to close the cottage properly.

Fortunately, many cottage owners are beating the blues by celebrating the end of cottage season with a "let's make a good situation out of a bad one" attitude - a sentiment that has become as common in cottage country as Muskoka chairs and mosquito repellent. Many cottagers are inviting guests to celebrate in a "less is more" type of atmosphere during their last days of rural rest. Visitors are sitting on moving boxes and using candles for electricity as they congregate and reminisce about the "unusual amount of mosquitoes" and "Johnny's first swim". For many, this last gathering makes the impending move back to the city a little more bearable.

It's also the perfect opportunity to swindle that neighbour into helping you budge the boat into the garage and the barbeque into the SUV - just two of many essential and equally annoying tasks to complete each autumn. Some imperative and tedious chores that can be completed without your neighbour's help include the draining of plumbing systems and shutting down the electricity. Ensuring that pipes are properly drained will avoid water freezing over, which can lead to flooding in the cottage. To properly drain the system, empty and clean all pipes, valves, tanks and pumps. When shutting off electricity, be sure to first turn off all major appliances as well as the water heater and electrical room heaters. When the time comes to re-open your cottage again, the start-up will be much smoother and safer.

If you're a long-time cottage owner, you know that vermin will do as much as your in-laws to get an invitation to your cottage. For this reason, go beyond hiding food and blocking entrances. Try leaving mothballs or whole cloves as both can discourage unwelcome rodents.

Rodents of another type that need to be discouraged from entering cottages in the off-season are thieves. The ideal tools to combat these seasonal stealers are alarm systems, which have become increasingly common in cottages. A more cost effective approach to security is keeping valuables, such as TV's, out of sight. There are also many companies that specialize in cottage protection that will send employees to your property weekly to ensure its safety. And while these chores may be monotonous - remember next summer is just around the corner!