

Commercial Customer Newsletter

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Energy Insider

Smart savings for business

The case for comfort: Top upgrades for multi-residential buildings

In his long career with Enbridge Gas, Energy Solutions Advisor **Anthony Centritto** has seen hundreds of energy-efficiency projects across many sectors—but this year is different, especially for multi-residential buildings. "I've never been as busy as I am this year," he says. "The number of projects going ahead is incredible." Here, he shares the top upgrades for multi-residential buildings.



Here are some of the top building control strategies that add flexibility and help you save:

What's driving the current demand for boiler upgrades in multi-residential buildings?

Due to the pandemic, people have been spending more time at home in general, and we know energy use in multi-residential buildings has increased. Just as we're seeing a spike in home renovations in the residential sector, we're also seeing a large number of property owners and managers in the multi-residential sector installing new boilers this year. Space heating tends to be the largest energy user in these buildings, so this upgrade makes a lot of sense in terms of controlling costs, keeping residents comfortable and lowering carbon emissions.

We're also seeing a strong commitment from the multi-residential sector to be green leaders and find ways to use energy more efficiently. Tenants are savvy and they're increasingly choosing green properties, so being able to offer a more sustainable building is a good market differentiator.

How do I know which type of boiler is best for my building?

For buildings that still have a non-condensing boiler, we recommend upgrading to a high-efficiency or condensing boiler to save energy and money. A high-efficiency boiler is 85 to 89 percent efficient and a condensing boiler is at least 90 percent efficient. To help customers decide between the two, I usually run the two scenarios together. I can tell you approximately how many cubic metres of natural gas you'll save each year with both kinds of boilers compared to your existing boiler, what the incentive is going to be, and I'll help you do the payback, so you'll know the return on investment. Enbridge Gas doesn't charge to run the numbers for you.

In all cases, although it may involve a higher upfront cost, the condensing boiler option offers higher natural gas savings per year and therefore a greater incentive from Enbridge Gas. And, the natural gas savings continue, year after year.

Location also matters—heating needs in Windsor are different from Thunder Bay. The weather data for your city is in our calculation tool, so part of the way we base our savings estimates is on where your building is located.

What are some other top upgrades for multi-residential buildings?

I don't think enough property owners/managers realize we offer incentives for automated control systems. If you're not going to put in a new boiler this year, you can add controls to your existing boiler to improve efficiency—that's an easy and relatively inexpensive project to complete. I recently worked with a property management company in Hamilton that added controls to boilers in approximately 20 buildings they own and the savings were substantial.

Another upgrade is boiler pumping. If you add a variable frequency drive (VFD), the pump will only pump when it's needed, instead of at a constant flow, which uses more natural gas than necessary. Again, that's something we offer incentives for.

And finally, ventilation has become much more important because of the pandemic, so we're seeing more interest in high-efficiency make-up air units, another technology that comes with incentives.

Beyond support on projects, what other tools do you provide?

I meet with customers regularly to talk about projects they're considering, answer any questions they may have and help them prioritize, based on expected results. If they need more details on technologies or incentives, I can connect them to subject matter experts. My customers appreciate that I offer impartial advice and can help them find the right solution for their specific needs. We stay in constant communication.

We also have a technology department and sometimes we offer pilot projects—buildings can participate by installing new technologies so we can monitor how much natural gas they save. For example, natural gas heat pumps are growing in popularity, so we are piloting those in a few buildings right now.

Learn more about upgrades for multi-residential buildings

[See all incentives](#)

Better air quality with a better bottom line: Why upgrade to condensing MUA units

For buildings with greater ventilation requirements, condensing make-up air units can improve air quality, provide greater comfort and create a healthier environment. Check out this quick primer on a solution that saves.



What are make-up air units?

Condensing make-up air (MUA) units are designed to bring in fresh, outdoor air to replenish the air that's been pushed out through exhaust systems. This helps improve comfort, safety and air quality for those inside.

Which buildings are best suited for MUA units?

MUA units are recommended for buildings with greater ventilation requirements—whether it's removing contaminants or providing a more comfortable indoor temperature. This includes commercial kitchens or restaurants, multi-unit residential buildings, manufacturing facilities, wastewater treatment plants, fitness centres and more.

How do condensing MUA units work?

MUA units take in fresh air from outdoors. The air first passes through filters and dampers to regulate how much air is brought in, removing dust, debris, smoke and other contaminants in the process. It's then heated with a gas-fired heat exchanger before being circulated through the building.

What's the advantage of a condensing MUA unit?

Condensing MUA units are similar to non-condensing models, but with multiple heat exchangers that extract more waste heat. With less natural gas needed to heat the air, condensing MUA units provide the same level of output, at a lower cost.

The benefits stack up:

- At least 90 percent efficient.
- Lower natural gas and electricity costs.
- Higher indoor air quality and comfort for employees and customers.
- Fewer odours, with fresh, ventilated air.

Incentives for condensing MUA units

We pay up to 50 percent of project costs for MUA units and more.

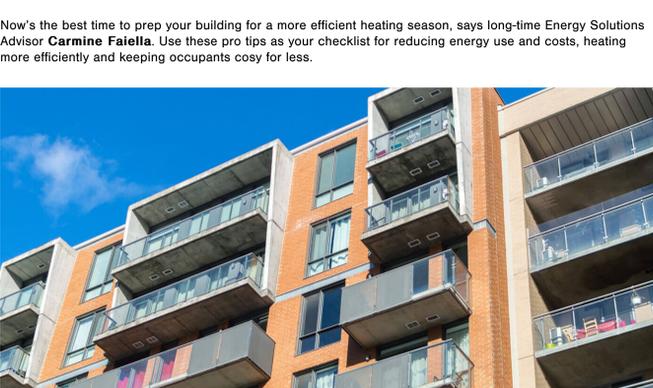
	Incentive
Constant speed	\$0.50/CFM
2 speed or VFD	\$1.00/CFM

Learn more about MUA benefits and incentives

[See MUA incentives](#)

7 off-season pro tips to prep for heating season

Now's the best time to prep your building for a more efficient heating season, says long-time Energy Solutions Advisor **Carmine Faiella**. Use these pro tips as your checklist for reducing energy use and costs, heating more efficiently and keeping occupants cosy for less.



1. Get a walkthrough or energy assessment

The off-season is a great time to get us to do a no-cost building walkthrough, and/or get an energy assessment from a service provider. These are effective ways to hone in on areas of concern or opportunities to improve energy efficiency. The report can inform you of the state of your boiler plant and help you determine what can be done to maintain a stable, efficient working boiler plant for this heating season and beyond.

2. Boost boiler performance

Preventative maintenance is crucial to commercial boiler optimization and it's easier to service this equipment in the cooling season. Maintenance helps boilers last longer and reduces the likelihood of a breakdown when heating is critical in colder months, giving you peace of mind. Routine maintenance includes venting, combustion air, gas supply piping and/or filtration, water quality and piping, controls and more.

3. Address last season's issues

Last winter, did you notice heating issues, such as irregular temperatures or boilers running extended periods to provide necessary heat? If so, the cooling season is the best time to execute on any necessary upgrades to mechanical systems—once the heat has to come on in September, it can be more challenging to implement improvements.

4. Clean rooftop make-up air units and air handling units

The best time to do this is when it's not snowing! This includes cleaning of filters, evaporator coils and condenser coils to ensure optimal performance and that good indoor air quality is maintained. Some buildings actually do this two or three times a year, especially if there's lots of construction in the area, because these units are sucking up everything and that's going to affect the air quality in your lobbies, hallways and so on.

5. Decalcify heat exchangers

Space heating boilers often have heat exchangers. In the off-season, have heat exchangers inspected for calcification and sedimentation buildup: too much of these substances will compromise the heat exchangers' performance and cost you more in higher energy use.

6. Calibrate set points

Make sure temperature set points and control strategies are ideal, so you're not heating areas that don't need to be heated. I've seen overheated hallways, fans running at near-capacity (even overnight) and other energy-wasters. We offer incentives for sensors, controls and other technologies that allow you to set more precise operating schedules that save natural gas.

7. Check your neutralizer

For high-efficiency boilers, it's important to ensure the neutralizers are working correctly and determine if they need to be replaced. They don't last forever! If they're maintained, they provide longevity to the boiler. Neutralizers also prevent acid condensate from going down the drain, which helps the environment. Twice a year would be ideal for this, but even once a year is good.

BONUS TIP!

Prepping heating upgrades this year? Take Carmine's advice:

If you're considering a retrofit this year, it's best to schedule it now, as greater lead times are required for projects because of COVID-19. Don't wait until boilers burn out—take a proactive approach. If you have an aging boiler plant, we recommend looking at high-efficiency or condensing boilers for energy and bill savings, improved comfort and lower GHG emissions. We can help you get it done.

Contact an Energy Solutions Advisor to learn more

[Contact an expert](#)

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