



## OTTAWA CITIZEN

### Pump up the volume

#### Makeover reveals hidden space in cramped bungalow

By Paula McCooey, The Ottawa Citizen

If you live in a large house that feels cramped, it's a sure sign your home may be poorly designed. Such was the case for accountants Roxanne Doré and Yves Fréchette, owners of a generous 2,700-square-foot 1960s bungalow in the lush east-side neighbourhood of Rothwell Heights. They enjoyed the luxury of an oversized three-quarter-acre corner lot, but the choppy small rooms inside did not make for comfortable living spaces.



The new gourmet kitchen features custom Cabico espresso-stained maple cabinets with translucent glass accent panels, quartz countertops and a glass tile backsplash.

**Photograph by:** Jana Chytilova, The Ottawa Citizen

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"The living room was probably the biggest (room) and that was about 10 by 14 feet," says Fréchette. "We had a tiny kitchen that was segregated, with a tiny breakfast area. There were a lot of walls, lots of divisions within the house ... 2,700 square feet is still not that small, but it felt very cramped in there because there were so many tiny rooms in it."

They knew this was an issue when they bought the house in 2002. They did a few small renovations to tide them over until the right time came for a full gut, then brought in Chuck Mills, owner of Chuck Mills Residential Design & Development Inc. ([cmillsdesign.com](http://cmillsdesign.com)), to update their home and emphasize the volume inside — a welcome change for the busy family. The couple, both 41, have two boys, Mathieu, who is 10, and nine-year-old Alexandre.

Going with Mills was obviously a good choice, considering he won five awards this year for this renovation project alone — two provincial awards of distinction (most outstanding bathroom renovation and best renovation between \$100,000 and \$500,000) and three Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association Housing Design Awards (best renovation/addition \$350,000 to \$499,999, custom bathroom and kitchen).

"I was far beyond pleased," says Mills. "You never know from year to year what the judges will be looking for."

Apparently what wowed the judges this year included the bungalow's vaulted tray ceilings, a grandmaster bedroom with ensuite addition and curved modern staircase with a steel stringer and open maple treads.

Between the bumped-out kitchen and living area and an addition for the master, the couple gained an extra 1,200 square feet of living space.

The roof may have been one of the biggest challenges. The couple felt limited with their standard eight-foot ceilings, so Mills replaced the roof with steeper rooflines to gain the head room needed to create an extra two feet for sloped tray ceilings in the living room, dining room, kitchen and master bedroom.

"They wanted to open up the living room, dining room, and kitchen for a large, open-concept entertaining area, but they also wanted volume ceiling. There was no way I could do that with the existing trussed roof," says Mills. "But once I put a new roof on there, I could actually build the volume into the underside of the new trusses."

The master suite features french glass doors that open to the back patio — a luxury on a warm summer night — and the ensuite bathroom exudes a decadent organic theme with a Kohler infinity spa tub, a bamboo and quartz floating vanity with shallow vessel sink and waterfall faucet, a tiled double-glass walk-in shower with custom bottle niches and heated rectangular tiled porcelain floor to warm cold feet on winter mornings.

Of course, the couple each have their favourite room in the house. For Fréchette, it's the spacious living room with a grand stone fireplace and a picture-perfect view of their landscaped backyard and new 20- by 40-foot saltwater pool.

"We put in this massive wood-burning fireplace," he says. "And I'm a guy that likes to make a nice fire when it's chilly out there." Doré is a big fan of her new gourmet kitchen with custom Cabico espresso-stained maple cabinets and translucent glass accent panels, quartz countertops with glass tile backsplash, a funky rollout microwave drawer built into an island with a raised breakfast bar and separate corner banquette eating area.

"When I'm in the kitchen and if I'm cooking, and the fireplace is going, I can see the fireplace, the kids in there playing," she says. "So from that point, I can see everything that is going on." Next to the kitchen is the open dining room with a stylish mid-wall mounted gas fireplace and stone wall over the server cabinet. Mills says the issues inside their home were as problematic as the exterior.

"It had this sort of hideous gambrel roof over a section of the house. And when you drove by you actually couldn't tell where the front door was."

Now there's no question where the entrance is located. The entire exterior was redesigned with pronounced layered gables, timber-frame columns and new cladding consisting of stone, stucco and shingle siding.

Rockcliffe Landscaping ([rockcliffelandscaping.com](http://rockcliffelandscaping.com)) manicured the front yard, removing unnecessary brush but keeping their beautiful grand pine and a large lilac bush in the front. They also installed a sprinkler system and built small pillars with lights at the entrance of the pathway to the front door to showcase the square Stonelink stone, chosen to complement the linear design of the home.

The entire project took a year. The couple lived with Doré's parents for about seven months during the construction.

And while the budget came in around \$100,000 more than the \$350,000 or so they expected because of changes and upgrades they made as the project unfolded, they felt it was a better option than buying another home if they were going to stay in the same neighbourhood.

"We wanted to stay in the Rothwell Heights area and home prices in this area have increased significantly since we bought our home. So we knew that it was a good investment. If we were to buy a new but older home in the area, we would need to pay more than \$1 million and would still not have exactly what we wanted," says Fréchette, who is proud to say they can make it to the ByWard Market on foot in one hour.

So how does open living with long sight lines versus small choppy rooms change the way you live? You have more parties, of course.

"Other than being much happier to come into the house, (the renovation) has definitely let us entertain a lot more than before," Fréchette, says. "We have parties, we have people over. Both my kids play hockey, so we have a lot of hockey parties with the kids, it's just more appropriate for having large groups in your house."

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