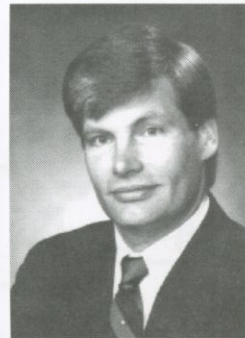




**CLIMATECARE.**

Volume 12, issue 2  
Fall 1999

# AN ENGINEER'S OPINION



## Editorial

## The Atlas service experience

**T**his summer I got lots of inquiries from homeowners trying to identify the best air conditioner to get for their home. In not one instance was I asked why they should buy the unit from Atlas. The assumption is that products are different and contractors are all the same. Every contractor is completely different and Atlas is unique.

It is gratifying to get positive feedback from our customers in recognition for the hard work and efforts of our people to deliver the best personal service experience possible. This is the result of a 5-year improvement process. We knew we would be facing serious new competition in the form of gas utility spinoff companies as well as major retailers. But we also knew we had two advantages. We can move faster to make changes and we can personalize the service delivery process. We do this with people and technology.

First, we reorganized the company into customer-focused teams. Second, we began using a team-hiring method to ensure we get bright people who are committed to our group goals. We invest heavily in training, with an industry high of 40 hours/year/employee. We take advantage of industry training programs as well as our own and programs developed through ClimateCare, an organization of like-minded independent contractors. Our service staff are the best qualified in the industry, with gas heating, air conditioning, and ventilation licenses.

Atlas has invested heavily in technology. New software ensures that we do not overbook or miss any scheduled appointments. Every service customer gets a guaranteed appointment. If something should come up, we call to reschedule at your convenience.

We maintain permanent records of every piece of equipment and service visit, and keep special notes on the

unique features of your home. Everything is at our fingertips. Our people arrive with the knowledge they need to service your equipment. We track warranty information and are able to respond better than anyone else for product recalls.

Every mechanic is linked to every other person in the company with his "Mike" radio so that he can give you an answer to virtually every question on any subject before he leaves your home.

In addition to the training activity we do with the ClimateCare group, as ClimateCare members, we also purchase core products together to maintain our competitiveness and access to the latest new products.

During the heat wave this summer we were able to service every one of our customers, usually within one day. We extended our service hours in the Toronto area to 8 p.m. Monday-Friday and opened 4 hours on Saturdays from 8 a.m. until noon. The office is staffed with trained personnel who can schedule work and answer any questions you might have.

At Atlas we look at a customer's life. We ensure that you are safe, comfortable, and healthy in your

home. Atlas maintains the most comprehensive set of warranty and customer service standards in the industry. If you're not satisfied with your purchase and we are not able to rectify the problem, we will replace the product or refund the service cost.

Atlas has been in business since 1932 because we have been able to deliver a brand of personal service which few have been able to match. We hope that our new customers in Burlington, Hamilton, Ancaster, and Dundas will come to enjoy the Atlas service experience as much as our other customers have.

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***"We live in an older home in Toronto and have had many workers in our home doing renovations and repairs over the past year. It was a pleasant surprise to have professional workers who took the time and care to make sure that their job was done completely and treated our home as if it were their own. Thank you once again for a job well done."***

***—J.A. and C.R., Atlas customers***

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## An Engineer's Opinion

An Engineer's Opinion is published to assist homeowners in creating the healthiest, most comfortable environment in their homes at the most reasonable cost. If you have questions, criticism, or input, we want to hear them. Please write or call me personally.

Roger Grochmal, P.Eng.,  
President

# The furnace: the heart of the house

*We've had a long glorious summer but soon we'll be faced with another tough, cold winter. The furnace in a real sense is the heart of the house. As the body needs a sound heart, your house needs a sound furnace. There are a lot of unsound furnaces in homes in the Golden Horseshoe area. On the low end of the seriousness scale are those which are simply not fuel efficient. On the other end are those which leak poisonous carbon monoxide (CO) gas into the house. Although fumes are a normal byproduct of combustion, in a healthy furnace they're safely vented with a sound heat exchanger. That's why regular furnace inspections and tuneups are absolutely essential for safety. This is particularly important for older furnaces. If you think your furnace may need to be upgraded, or you're not sure, read on.*

## When to retire your furnace

In recent years our new found understanding that there isn't an infinite supply of fuel in the earth has led to amazing advances in technology. From the point of view of fuel consumption, today any furnace over 12 years old is obsolete. If your furnace is otherwise in excellent condition, you may prefer to stick with it for a few more years. However, have it assessed by a reputable heating and air conditioning contractor. They should be able to give you an accurate estimate of the fuel savings and performance improvements available with various new furnace options and also what expenses may be involved in keeping your present furnace operating safely for a few years. Look at that against the cost of replacement and you can make a well informed decision. If you do decide to replace your furnace, consider making other energy-saving improvements at the same time, such as replacing your hot water heater.

## Beware the bargain furnace

Atlas competes vigorously for your business. We compete on the basis of our engineering skills and knowledge of products and systems. And we compete on price to the extent it's safe to do so. But we know, as do the competitors we respect, that prices can be cut only so far before the interests of the purchaser are no longer served.

As consumers, these days we put a lot of pressure on retailers to give us more for our dollar. By and large that's a good thing. Some heating contractors try to create attractive pricing in a dangerous way by cutting corners on installation. They avoid permits and use

unsupervised subcontractors to do their installations. Codes and standards are established to give you security. Atlas and other reputable companies in our industry would do what the code says even if it weren't the law. It's simply the right way to do business when you're dealing with something so important as a family's furnace.

Safety issues aside, it's wrong to make your furnace buying decision on price alone. A furnace is extremely important to your well being. The one you buy today may be expected to last as long as you live in your home. Over that period of time a few hundred dollars saved on a bad furnace buy may not look too important against a history of high maintenance costs, excess fuel consumption, and general dissatisfaction with the performance.

## Carrier furnace lineup for 1999

Carrier has assembled the best lineup of high performance furnaces we have ever seen. There are two mid-efficiency furnaces and one high-efficiency furnace in the lineup for this winter. The Weathermaker 8000 mid-efficiency furnace comes in two models: one with two-stage heating and a two-speed fan and the other with two-stage heating and a completely variable fan. These furnaces use proven technology to deliver improved comfort, quieter operation, and a lower operating cost. The furnace produces a low heat output over a longer heating cycle to reduce drafts. The variable speed furnace provides important hydro savings when you elect to run your fan continuously for your air cleaner.

The Carrier Infinity high-efficiency furnace also contains two-stage heating and variable speed fan operation while delivering 96.4% AFUE, the highest efficiency in the marketplace.

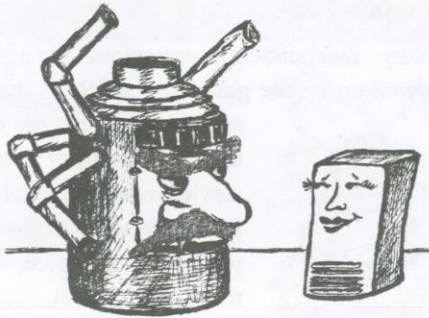
## Don't be alarmed if your new furnace looks small and cute

When we were young, furnaces were massive. With their great arms reaching everywhere, they looked like the big ugly friend you wanted to protect you from the bullying winter.

Today's furnaces, comparatively speaking, are petite. Don't be fooled. These small furnaces are far more efficient foes of winter than those big guys ever were. Another thing: don't be put off if a reputable contractor recommends a smaller capacity furnace than you think you need. With today's good insulation, it takes less



capacity to do the job and a furnace that's too large causes serious problems. It will cycle, giving you wide fluctuations in temperature level as well as insufficient humidity from your humidifier. You'll never be comfortable.



## GC Plans

The summer of '99 was one to remember. The heat and humidity were relentless. Every air conditioner was pushed to its limits and beyond. Many units failed and many just couldn't get the job done. The wait for a service man from most companies was 4 to 10 days or longer. Many even stopped answering their phones. We answered our phones and while we couldn't get to everyone, Atlas GC Plan customers got priority service within a day. Everyone received an appointment and we got there when we said we would. This is great peace of mind for less than 50 cents a day for maintenance of a furnace and an air conditioner.

In addition to priority service there are a number of benefits our customers receive. These include Seniors' discounts, parts discounts, overtime service at regular rates, fewer breakdowns and extended equipment life.

Take time to consider a GC Plan for your home and enjoy great peace of mind.



### Call now

Ask us about our GC Plan for your home comfort equipment. Find out how you can achieve peace of mind for as little as \$79 per year. Call the local branch office at the numbers listed on the back of this newsletter.

## Hot water heaters

The ubiquitous water heater, long the sole product of the gas utility, is about to become a hot consumer product. On October 1, 1999 Enbridge Consumers Gas plans to stop renting new water heaters. They will maintain all existing rentals until the water heaters come to the end of their useful lives.

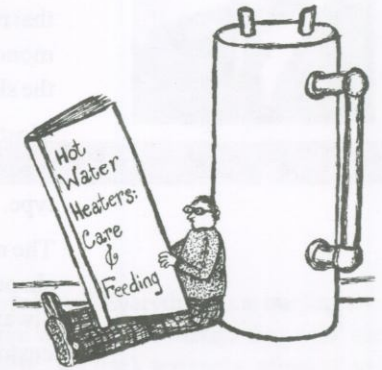
This will create a new market for the sales and financing of water heaters. When your water heater expires, or sooner if you choose, you will be able to purchase a new one. You will have a much larger choice of products, features, and efficiencies than was ever available before. Ontario was the only jurisdiction in North America with such an extensive rental program. We will now join the rest of the world.

Since the furnace and water heater often share a common chimney you will be able to link the responsibility for supplying and maintaining the two products together with one contractor.

### Introducing a hot water heater from Maytag

Atlas has long been in the forefront of introducing new products into the market. We are pleased to bring you a water heater from the most trusted name in home appliances—Maytag.

Maytag water heaters have been rated by Consumers Digest magazine as "Best Buys". They are designed to stay clean inside, without sediment deposits that diminish water heating power, rob energy efficiency, and shorten tank life. If you have a dependable Maytag washer or dishwasher, a trouble-free Maytag water heater makes all the sense in the world and all the hot water you'll ever need.



### Introductory special

With the purchase and installation of every Maytag Series 10 water heater, Atlas will include a 5 year gold maintenance plan on the unit at no extra charge. This applies to all units installed before December 31, 1999.

## Atlas notes

### CO detector update

Many municipalities are now bringing in bylaws that require every residence have at least one carbon monoxide (CO) detector. This should be installed in the sleeping area to be easily heard.

Most CO detectors are now the electro-chemical type of sensor. This is the most reliable and accurate type.

The marketplace is full of CO detectors of all sizes, shapes, and prices. Atlas strives to ensure that we always have available the best products for our customers. We currently offer two products, Senco Model One and S-Tech.

The Senco Model One carbon monoxide detector is the No. 1 rated detector and it is made in Canada. This unit is self contained, battery powered, and sensitive only to carbon monoxide, so it will not generate false alarms. It is not available in retail stores. The S-Tech detector that we sell is the best metal oxide detector and meets all UL standards.

If you have old-style detectors, you should consider upgrading to the latest units and ensure that your family is protected.

### Check out our website

Atlas now has a customer feedback website. The site address is [www.atlasair.on.ca](http://www.atlasair.on.ca). This site will be used exclusively to service our existing customers. There will be an area to order past issues of our many educational publications and back issues of *An Engineer's Opinion*. You will be able to ask questions about the home comfort equipment in your home plus much, much more.

To encourage customers to use the site we are having a monthly draw among those who respond for a \$50 gift certificate for dinner at either the Keg or Kelsey's restaurants. Log on and check us out.



### Hello, Hamilton

In June of this year Atlas expanded into the Hamilton area with a new branch office. We have been slowly moving out to Oakville and Burlington and it was only a matter of time before we went into Hamilton, Ancaster, and Dundas. This is a natural progression for us.

So many independent contractors have been swallowed up by the gas utility affiliates that we

saw an opportunity to bring the Atlas brand of personal service to this market. If you know someone in the area who needs service, have them give us a call.



### Atlas' new extended hours

On May 1 of this year, Atlas extended its regular service hours from 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. each day and opened up on Saturdays from 8 a.m. until 12 noon. This was a great success for those customers whose schedules don't allow them to be at home during weekdays.

We have our staff in the office to take your calls and schedule the work. There is no extra charge for any work done in this afternoon early evening shift. After 8 p.m. and on weekends we continue to have our regular on-call schedule with mechanics on standby to take calls from our answering service.

At present this service is only available in the Metro Toronto area. It is not available in Hamilton yet but will be as soon as the branch establishes itself.

## Atlas Air Conditioning Company



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