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Our unsung heroes

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Drip ... Drip ... drip ...

It was the steady trickle of water from the bottom of the hot water tank in the basement of my home that indicated that after almost 20 years of uninterrupted service, this unit was nearing the end of its useful lifespan.

After letting it go on longer than I should have, I finally called in to report the problem so as not to come home some night to 60 gallons of water flooding the basement.

It took the guy from the gas company about two seconds to diagnose the problem and make a recommendation.

?Yup, that's pooched,? he said. ?You need a new tank.?

No big deal to me. It's a rental so they have to replace it.

?Ya know,? he added. ?You might want to consider replacing your furnace as well. It doesn't look too good.?

He was right. The furnace had also cranked over 20 years of service after being installed in what was then, a brand new home.

After talking with the furnace division consultant, he arranged to have both units replaced on the same day.

A couple of days later, two men arrived in the morning with a big truck and everything they needed to put in the new units.

Four-and-a-half hours later they were done. They removed the old water tank and furnace. They then installed a new tank and a new furnace with additional venting, updated PCV pipe, a new on / off switch that was up to code, and a new thermostat.

When they called me to the basement to have a look at the finished work, I complimented them on getting it all done in only half a day.

?Well, when you do it every day, it's just routine for us,? the one guy replied.

During this time when so many businesses have had to close, it brings a better appreciation of those services that really are an integral part of the community and keep us all going when times get tough.

I think topping the list must be the farmers. They haven't quit. They are still out there doing what they have to do to get crops ready for planting, keeping the beef and dairy farms operating, and pruning the trees in the fruit orchards.

If for some reason, and this would never happen, the government ordered the farms to close during this pandemic, it would cause widespread panic.

Within a couple of weeks, the large urban centres would collapse as people scrambled to find food and chaos took over the streets. They would soon be boiling tree bark and making grass and dandelion salads.

A lot of downtown urban people seem to forget that food doesn't magically appear in the supermarkets. It is grown and farmed by hard-working people.

All that food doesn't get to the supermarket by wheelbarrow and camels. It requires the important trucking industry to keep those stores supplied. Without the big rigs and the people who drive them, those skids full of produce from the Ontario Food Terminal aren't going anywhere.

Electricity is something we tend to take for granted ? as long as it's still there. Once the power goes out, you're life is pretty much coming to a standstill.

Power employees, along with other utility company workers are still on the job providing the needed services to keep our society running.

Auto mechanics and related services have kept operating. There would nothing more frustrating to have your car sidelined because it needs an new alternator ? except you have no where to get the new part and no one to install it.

If you have a pipe that bursts there are still plumbers who make calls.

If a windstorm rips the shingles off of your roof, you can try climbing up a ladder with a 50-pound bag of replacement shingles and risk getting seriously injured ? or you can call the guys who do it for a living and know how to get the job done without having a ladder collapse or falling off of a roof.

On top of this, fire fighters, police, and paramedics are still on the job should you need them.

It is times like that makes you realize how important some jobs are in society.

For those snooty types that look down on people who work with their hands, and yes there are many, suddenly that guy who shows up at your house with a set of tools can be a life-saver.

I may not be having dinner in a fancy restaurant any time soon, but at least I have hot water.