

56 Armadale Avenue, Toronto

Inspection Report

March 11, 2014



COMPANY INFORMATION

- Professional Engineer (**P**rofessional **E**ngineers of **O**ntario)
- B.A.Sc. - Civil Engineering (University of Toronto)
- 30 years Inspection Experience
(14+ years with **Carson, Dunlop & Associates**)
- Over 12,000 Homes Inspected

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Overall Condition:

This is a solidly built home that is in good structural condition. While it needs some updating, the house has recently been rewired and the roof is in good condition.

Roofing, Flashings and Chimneys:

The sloped roof is surfaced with asphalt shingles. The shingles are in good condition and are likely just a little past middle age.

The masonry chimney is in good overall repair.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

-Roof inspected with binoculars.

Exterior:

The exterior brickwork is in good overall condition. The aluminum eavestroughs and downspouts are also in good overall repair despite some localized denting.

The attached garage is holding up well overall. There are some northeast settlement cracks (as there are at the northeast corner of the house itself), but it is strongly suspected that this movement happened many decades ago, not long after the house was first constructed. There has been little further movement since the cracks were patched some time ago.

The front porch and the front porch roof structure are in disrepair. Due to years of frost action, moisture and salt, the front porch bricks and concrete are breaking apart. The wood trim around the porch roof is damaged and this might well have spread to the underlying structure as well. Further (invasive) investigation will be required to determine the exact extent of required repairs. The cost of repairs will hinge on the results of that investigation and the proposed plan of repair. Consult several contractors for further information, but it can safely be assumed that the cost will be significant.

The grading at the northwest corner of the house should be built up with soil to provide a better drainage slope away from the house. It should also be ensured that the nearby downspout discharges westward well into the backyard. The front downspouts should be modified to discharge above grade several feet away from the house according to City bylaws. More information is available at: www.toronto.ca/water.

The rear deck was mostly obscured by snow, but some rotting sections were noted. This is not a high quality deck, but could likely be serviceable for a few years with some localized wood replacement.

Minor Deficiencies:

- A couple of garage door hinges need to be re-attached to the door itself.
- Seal/foam around the southwest dryer exhaust vent.
- Minor brickwork mortar gaps (such as behind the garage) should be repointed where necessary - maintenance item.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- Exterior inspection from ground level.
- Grading obscured by snow in some areas.

Structure:

The concrete block foundations support solid masonry exterior walls. The structure of the house appears to be in good overall condition.

While the main portion of the house appears to be solidly constructed, the rear addition (particularly the northwest "sun porch" structure) does not. It would appear that it was originally supported on cedar stumps. Attempts have been made to reinforce the foundations more recently. Mostly, though, these consist of wood and concrete block "shims" between the ground and the floor structure. It is suspected that there are no proper footings and that the piers do not extend down to below frost level. The northwest sunroom roof structure is also noticeably saggy when viewed from the backyard. While it is not likely to go anywhere for the next few years, the long term goal would be to replace this structure altogether.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- There is no access to the sloped roof spaces or the upper attic (the hatch was caulked shut and couldn't be opened without potentially damaging it).
- The rear addition crawlspace was viewed through the basement window, but visibility was limited.
- Walls were spotchecked only.
- 90% of the foundation wall area was obscured by interior finishes.

Electrical:

The house has a 100-amp service with a circuit breaker panel. This is a typical and appropriate service size.

The house has recently been rewired to eliminate the original knob-and-tube wiring that was present. The replacement work appears to have been very professionally done. Without access to all of the interior wall and ceiling surfaces, it isn't possible to guarantee its absence, but no *active* knob-and-tube wiring was visible or found during spotchecks of various electrical outlet and switch boxes.

Minor Deficiencies:

- The rear exterior electrical outlet should be fitted with a GFCI safety receptacle. Parts cost is less than \$20.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- Main breaker switch cover not opened and the main breaker was not operated.
- Concealed electrical components cannot be inspected.

Heating:

The house is heated by an oil-fired boiler that dates back to 1969. More importantly, the oil tank is quite old (at least as old as the boiler) and it is quite possible that it will not be insurable despite the presence of an appropriate above-floor plastic-coated copper oil line. We recommend budgeting roughly \$6,000 to \$8,000 for replacement with a gas boiler. Oil tank removal would likely add another \$600 to \$1,000. It would be a good idea to ensure that an appropriate gas line is present well in advance of replacement (i.e. have one installed over the summer). Traditionally, the Gas Company does not charge (or charge much) for this.

The boiler was found to be operable at the time of the inspection.

When the new boiler is installed we suggest installing radiators in the basement and eliminating the baseboard heaters.

Active, but minor, leakage was noted at the radiator valve stem in the southwest bedroom. This should be repaired. Evidence of past leakage was noted at some other radiators, like the one in the dining room. In general, try not to operate the rad valves, if at all possible, as this can cause leakage at the valve stems.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- Heat exchanger not visible.
- Safety devices not tested.
- The chimney cleanout was not opened to inspect the flue.
- Although we have no reason to suspect that one is present, it should be noted that checking the premises for buried oil tanks is not included in the inspection or the Standards of Practice.

Insulation:

Since the attic could not be accessed, the amount and type of insulation could not be personally verified, but speaking to the electrician that recently rewired the house, he mentioned that there was a minimal amount of cellulose insulation (about 4 or 5 inches) present in the main, upper attic. Now that the wiring has been replaced, we recommend upgrading to R-50. A ballpark cost estimate would be \$1,500 and up.

The original solid masonry walls were built without insulation and with no space to add more insulation. This is typical for the era. Since adding more insulation is not easily done, it is best to concentrate on reducing air infiltration through caulking/sealing and weatherstripping as much as possible.

The finished basement walls were found to be insulated with a reasonable amount of fibreglass (about R-12) where spotchecked.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

- There is no access to the sloped roof spaces or the upper attic (the hatch was caulked shut and couldn't be opened without potentially damaging it).
- Continuity of air/vapour barrier not verified.
- Although checking for asbestos (which may be present in many products and materials) is not included in the inspection or the Standards of Practice, we did note that the radiator pipes in the basement were formerly insulated with asbestos. This is very common in older houses. Fortunately, all of the accessible asbestos pipe wrap in the basement (i.e. in the furnace room) has been removed. The remainder is now enclosed behind ceiling finishes. Asbestos pipe insulation is not considered to be a hazard in the home if left undisturbed and there is no requirement to remove it. More information can be found at the Health Canada website – www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vsv/environ/asbestos-amiante-eng.pdf. If asbestos removal is desired at some point in the future (for instance, if the basement is lowered/renovated), the work needs to be professionally done – consult contractors for quotes.

Plumbing:

The incoming City supply pipe is upgraded ¾" copper where visible. The visible supply plumbing inside the house is primarily a combination of copper and PEX plastic. Water pressure is considered to be good for the area. There is a small section of galvanized steel supply piping by the boiler that should ultimately be replaced (at the time of boiler replacement would be a good time).

The visible waste plumbing is a combination of cast iron, ABS plastic, galvanized steel, lead and copper. Cast iron waste plumbing is currently an issue for some insurance companies (although their prejudice is not considered to be warranted in our opinion) – replace any cast iron stack sections found during renovations with plastic.

The electric water heater is a 184-litre unit that is 9 years old. Typical life expectancy is about 15 years.

The concrete laundry tub is cracked and leaking. While it may be possible to patch/caulk it for the short term, it should really be replaced - \$800 and up.

The 2nd floor bathtub has a newer, good quality acrylic insert. The apparent exhaust fan in the bathroom is actually just a cover over the original passive air vent hole. Strictly speaking, an exhaust fan is not required in a bathroom with an opening window.

Minor Deficiencies:

-The basement bathroom sink exhibits some surface crazing (cracking), but still appears to be watertight - monitor.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

-Concealed plumbing not inspected.

-Tub/sink overflows not tested.

-Isolating/relief valves and main shut-off valve not tested.

-The basement floor drain was not located (it is suspected to be covered by the newer carpet). It should be made accessible.

-The basement toilet had been temporarily removed at the time of the inspection, so it could not be tested.

Interior:

-The interior plaster shows some typical flaws (cracks and bulges), but is in reasonably good repair for its age. Bulges in the kitchen wall common with the dining room may ultimately have to be broken out and patched. Some main floor and basement ceilings have been recently resurfaced with drywall.

-Many of the windows are original and a number have no storms. Some are difficult to operate or are painted shut. We recommend replacing the non-historically-significant windows - as much for improved operability and cleanability as for increased energy efficiency. Very roughly \$75 and up per square foot.

-The basement stairs are supposed to have a railing. Headroom at the bottom of the basement stairs is less than ideal, but not cost-effective to improve.

-The fireplace has not been used for a long time. There is too much debris on the living room fireplace damper to open it. This is intended to be an operable fireplace, but it will be necessary to have the flue (and fireplace) cleaned and inspected by a WETT-certified fireplace specialist prior to use.

-The basement was dry at the time of the inspection. There is evidence of past excess moisture on drywall in the family room and bottom of the basement stairs, but moisture meter readings were acceptably low at the time of the inspection. It would appear that some basement waterproofing has been done from the exterior (south and north garage in particular) and this may account for the current dryness. As with any older home though, it is very important to prevent surface water accumulations near the house by keeping eavestroughs and downspouts well maintained and by promoting good drainage next to the foundations. If the basement is ever renovated/lowered, we recommend installing a watertight, drainage membrane such as [Delta MS](#) on the interior foundations prior to reframing, insulating and drywalling. This would lead to perimeter drainage tiles at floor level.

Inspection Methods and Limitations:

-No comment made on cosmetic aspects of interior finishes.

-CO/smoke detectors and appliances not inspected.

-New paint finishes and carpet in the basement tend to obscure historical evidence.

-Drainage tile not visible.

-In all houses, moisture problems may result in visible or concealed mold growth.

Environmental Consultants can assist if this is a concern.

Notes:

This is the inspection report for 56 Armadale Avenue, Toronto – performed on March 11, 2014. For the purposes of this report, the front of the house is considered to be facing east. The inspection was performed according to the standards of the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors – see Limitations and Conditions at www.yeatesinspect.com/lim&cond.htm.

Telephone consultation regarding this report is available free of charge – call 416-422-1571. Walkthroughs with the inspector can also be arranged at a typical cost of \$150.