



By: *George LeBlanc and John Gulland*

In our last History article we recorded as much information as we could find to get us to the beginning of WETT, and now we would like to review the years moving forward with our affiliates and past Presidents. All of these amazing volunteers worked with Boards and committees to lead the program to where it is today. In the beginning, the regional Affiliates did most of the field work of promoting and delivering the program. Here is some background:

### **WETT Affiliates**

**ARWETO** — Association of Registered Wood Energy Technicians of Ontario

Formed in 1988 by volunteer Board of Governors in association with the government of Ontario. The term “Registered” is significant because it was granted by the government to confer a degree of authority and status as an alternative to the government taking on the training and certification functions itself. ARWETO also hosted a trade show and conference known as the WOOD/GAS Forum for several years in the early 1990s. The “Forum” in 1995 had indoor and outdoor booths for the display and demonstration of products and also offered a program of education sessions. Technicians from across the country attended.

The Forum became the gathering for all industry members to meet yearly, to plan the events and training requirements for the following year. ARWETO had some advantages over the other affiliates (perhaps unfairly) because it was in the most populous province and was headquartered in the densely populated “Golden Horseshoe” of Ontario. The Association also had support from the Ontario government, which had been a major funder (along with the Federal government) of the WETT training system.

**AWETA** — Atlantic Wood Energy Technicians Association (Nova Scotia)

*Reported by Mike Kempton in 1995 WETT Ink.*

“Formed on September 15, 1988 by the Wood Heat Steering Committee in Nova Scotia that had been in existence for several years. The first official meeting of AWETA was October 19, 1988. In 1989 they ran their first WETT course and 10 courses later they had 248 members.

A “Train the trainer” course was held in May 1990 and the pilot for the Volunteer Firefighters course was held with a great response.



Elizabeth Mason was the first Chairperson who, with the help of Hal Dobblestyn (who worked for the provincial government), led the Association to be recognized in the province and nationally for their public education. By 1995, the local Board had members from the Fire Marshal's office, members of government agencies, insurance industry and building inspectors.

**AWET-M** — Association of Wood Energy Technicians of Manitoba  
*Reported by David Rayner in WETT Ink.*

AWET-M was formed in the spring of 1989 by a steering committee from various aspects of the industry. In 1992, AWET-M was recognized by the provincial government through the GAS and Oil Burner Regulation. Saskatchewan and Manitoba insurance companies provided support with the help of the Prairie Loss and Prevention League (PLPL). Dan Hebert and Gerry Currie of Portage Mutual were founding directors.

David Rayner, a chimney sweep and WETT instructor, helped with the first 100 members getting certified.

**WET-BC** — Wood Energy Technicians of British Columbia  
*WETT INK newsletter 1996*

WET-BC held an annual meeting in Penticton in September of 1995. National Director and newly appointed BC Secretary, Zigi Gadomski, reported good attendance, an excellent presentation by guest speaker Bill Tully, and an exciting new Board.

President John Francisty, Vice President Lorne Hoffman, Treasurer Marilyn Rosenke and Secretary Zigi Gadomski.

Directors were Steve Smith, Dave Butt, Larry Hipperson, Garth Bates and Jim Moore.

The appointment of a WET-BC Board that is, for the first time, representative of almost the whole province, is a significant step forward. Less than two weeks into their mandate, these directors are already planning WETT courses.

### **WETT-NB** — Wood Energy Technical Technicians of New Brunswick

A volunteer Board of Directors formed the Affiliate in 1988. It was led by Ned Fisher, a distributor who owned a family business called Compact Appliances in Sackville NB. Compact would become the largest supplier for most of Atlantic Canada.

With volunteers who had been Directors of CWEI, Edgar LeBlanc with National Insurance Company, and retailers Patrick Bourque and Brian Dingee held the first WETT courses that were launched and delivered in 1989. By 1990, New Brunswick had three instructors: Arnold Culberson, Edgar LeBlanc and George LeBlanc.

Public meetings were held at local farmers markets, municipal and provincial government sessions to foster and promote solid-fuel use. A Stove Changeout was campaigned and managed for New Brunswick.

The affiliates were promoting WETT training across the country with public education on solid fuel, at local municipal and provincial government events, local markets and distributor meetings.

#### **WETT Course Participants in 1997**

	NL	BC	NB	MB	NS	ON
A1	8	11	17	21	45	156
A2		7	12	21	27	38
B			8	9		28
C						11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>233</b>

Strong partnerships with WETT, HPBAC, APC, Environment Canada, NRC and several Canadian manufacturers brought a unified voice to a rapidly changing industry.

This momentum continued with the support of national insurance and regulatory participation, who stood behind the delivery of WETT training courses.

We completed our last history article with the Incorporation of **WETT on December 15, 1992.**

John Gulland and his staff were administering, reviewing and creating WETT courses and managing the day-to-day functions of the growing WETT program.

With a small group of volunteers on various committees, John continued developing new course materials and pushing forward. The instructions from the Board were to keep your head down and just keep working!

The information below was gathered from past WETT Ink articles, AGM minutes and talking with past **Presidents.**

1992-1995: **George LeBlanc**

There was no handbook.

ALL our communication was by FAX! Yes, I said **FAX!**

The volunteers would attend phone meetings that would last hours occasionally. Meeting notes were taken and then faxed back for review and revision. Feedback (sometimes very little, but John's leadership abilities always

prevailed!) would be directed to John and he would have materials out in short time for finalization. Courses were in demand and together John, his staff and the instructors delivered in record time.

The WETT Board decided to investigate a national newsletter. ARWETO had an Ontario newsletter at the time, but there was room for expansion nationally and it was decided to move forward. Here is an article that appeared in the **May 1995 first WETT INK** newsletter. (These are all available to read on our website under Members/Documents)

“A group of industry members met at the Sands Hotel and Convention Centre to discuss the formation of a national newsletter. This group was comprised of representatives from ARWETO, WETT Inc., AWETA and WETT-NB. The idea was supported by all members and we are pleased to show our first edition of this publication in May 1995.

The newsletter will support the ongoing efforts of the WETT Affiliates to provide training and education. At the same time, we will provide our manufacturers and distributors with a quality advertising medium.

WETT Ink. wishes to acknowledge and thank ARWETO for its leadership on bringing about this ‘new-look’ national newsletter.”

**John Rance**, who was the President of ARWETO, was the editor and, with his leadership and volunteers, the future articles became the voice of the hearth industry.

**ARWETO** was hosting its second Wood/Gas Forum and took the show to a larger facility located in Meadowdale (Mississauga) in 1995, which was a meeting place for all of industry, manufacturers, installers, technicians, sweeps, insurance, regulatory and so on. The show was growing, as you will see in the 1996 photos. Credit goes to the handful of volunteers, such as John Trozzo, Leslie Woods, Gordon Flagler, Rob Knechtel, Tex Macleod, Jan Herald and countless others.

The **ARWETO Forum** was also an opportunity to host the WETT AGM and discuss the growth and path of WETT training. Course attendance was increasing and the demand for administration signalled the need to seek an Association Management Team that could provide more capacity. A few interviews were held and a decision was made.

### **ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT TEAM**

In 1995, the WETT Board hired **BB&C** and moved from John Gulland’s offices to Bloor Street in downtown Toronto.

Here are a few words recorded in the **Inaugural WETT INK May 1995 Newsletter** that went out to all members.

Letter from the President, George LeBlanc

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank the WETT Inc. Board of Directors for their valued time and efforts in helping this Association achieve its goals. This has been a somewhat trying year for all, as we moved our administration and office to BB&C Association Management Services in Toronto. There has been constant improvement in our relations with the Provincial Affiliates and there has been allowance for fair representation

on the Board. The new-look, improved Directory will become a catalyst in our marketing and promotion for 1995-96.

New Courses and training materials such as **Reliable Venting** and the insurance industry IRA Course (**Insurance Risk Analysis**) will increase the integrity of WETT Inc. over the next few years. (These courses were built by John Gulland and volunteers).

The development of our newsletter will also be an exciting place for you to participate through your WETT affiliate or as an individual. With **BB&C** at the helm, our Association is in good hands, with guaranteed cooperation and success. I encourage you to speak with Amanda and Nadia, who work with WETT on a daily basis, and to Brenda, who is working with ARWETO on their annual Forum.

It is impossible for me to explain what it has been like to act as your President over the last two years, but it has been an honour to represent the WETT membership.”

Respectfully,

George LeBlanc

President WETT Inc.

#### **1995-1996: Brian Yanik Highlights**

##### **Clean Air Act in B.C.**

The Clean Air Act of 1994 states that non-EPA or CSA B415 stoves cannot be sold or resold after November of 1994.

The **ARWETO '96** show was a success!

Do you recognize any of these faces?





## 1996-1997: Steve Keeling

### WETT Manual Revision

The WETT Inc. Board of Directors has initiated a major project to revise and update the WETT Reference Manual for 1997. Three things have conspired to make updating a necessity: the continued evolution of wood-heating technology and the commercial market, the changing characteristics of Canadian Housing, and the publishing of the 1995 edition of the National Building Code of Canada (NBC). For example, technology and market changes create the need for work on pellet appliances, outdoor boilers and venting systems. Changes such as house ventilation, protection against house depressurization, and combustion air supplies.”

Presidents Message

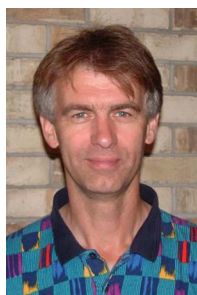
*By Steve Keeling*

“I recently read the following quotation attributed to the chief elected officer of a professional association. ‘Its like being on a merry-go-round, and a giant hand ratchets up the speed at which we go around, and the golden ring of opportunity keeps getting smaller.’ While I might agree with the first observation, which describes the increasing speed with which associations have to respond to change and member expectations, I’m not so sure that I agree that the golden ring is shrinking for Wood Energy Technical Training, change is indeed imperative...and it is also an opportunity.”

*(Submitted by David Yetman - Insurance Advisory Organization Inc)*

August 1996 the first WETT courses were delivered in Gander, **Newfoundland**. “In my former position as District Fire Commissioner NFLD, and now a contractor for the Insurers Advisory Organization Inc., we are promoting WETT with interested members and municipalities. I regularly promote the need for a more proactive presence in this province.”

## 1997-1998 Marshall Byle



### Interview:

**George:** Marshall, you have been one of the pioneers in the Chimney Sweep development in the beginning years. Where and how did this all begin? Let’s go back in time.

**Marshall:** Back in the late 1970s when oil jumped in price, electricity was very expensive and many people were putting in wood stoves with few codes. Many of the small-town Fire Departments were getting multiple fire calls per week related to wood heat.

I had just finished my boilermaker apprenticeship and decided to start a chimney sweeping business to supplement my income between boiler jobs. In my quest for equipment, I met Norman Lenz, a master chimney sweep from Germany who helped me acquire good European brushes etc. but also advice on pricing and



dealing with a multitude of technical questions. Norman had started the Ontario Chimney Sweeps Association and you couldn't keep me out of it. Our youngest son Nathan took over the business 10 years ago.

**George:** And what are some of your first memories of WETT?

**Marshall:** Around the same time, the Canadian Wood Energy Institute (CWEI) was involved with creating training for wood energy professionals as a result of pressure from insurance companies and fire departments. Unfortunately, Norman butted heads with the CWEI group, as he came from Germany where the chimney sweeps completely controlled this industry. Norman pushed for me to become President of the Ontario Chimney Sweeps Association, and I managed to do some healing. I became a member of the CSA standards committee for CSA B601 that basically outlined what a Solid Fuel Technician and Chimney Sweep needed for training. This provided the framework for developing the Wood Energy Technical Training manual and the courses that made up the program. You couldn't keep me out of that either.

I continued to represent the Ontario Chimney Sweeps Association on CSA B365 and the ULC 600E for many years.

I had the opportunity to be invited to the first train-the-trainer course held in Rockland, ON (near Ottawa) with some of the best industry leaders from across Canada like Jan Herald and Zigi Gadomski, just to name a couple.

**George:** What are some of your fondest memories as an instructor?

**Marshall:** During my career instructing WETT courses I was sent all over Ontario as well as delivering the first WETT courses in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It gives me great pride to communicate with one of my students like Henry Nagtegaal who has served on the WETT board and is now an instructor in Manitoba. I must say that I never delivered a course where I didn't learn something myself. That's why I'm a big advocate of face-to-face classes.

Being on the CSA B365 committee and other technical committees such as ULC chimneys and vents allowed me to stay up to date on the latest codes. For a number of years, I sat on the WETT Technical Advisory Committee and acted as Chair for much of that time. This advisory committee is quite a job because questions came in from consumers as well as members. A week didn't go by that inquiries didn't come in for a committee of volunteers.

Over the years I received many calls from students. Many times, they were in a legal dilemma. I never turned anyone away or charged them.

I really enjoyed the "Wood/gas Forums" put on by ARWETO. I believe the revised chimney sweeps chapter was done by Master Sweep Leslie Woods and myself in 1997.

**George:** Do you ever stop by the business now that it's been 10 years or more?

**Marshall:** "Five years. They kicked me to the curb quite a while ago. As a trades person, I loved working doing service or installs. I disliked the administration of retail. I do drop in every few days to see the crew and they

often ask me some questions about a job. It's kind of sad when I look in the scrap bins to see stoves and fireplaces that I installed.”

**George:** “Thank you Marshall for taking the time to share some memories. I always respect your drive and input.

Hope to get a golf game in with you in the near future.”

1997 Wood/Gas Forum was titled “**The year of the customer.**”

The WETT Board approved the revisions of chapter 4 (Chimneys and venting) Chapter 6 (Principles of Effective Venting) and Chapter 13 (Chimney Sweeping). Revisions will be completed by year end. A roundtable discussion was held to plan out a 10-year projection for the future of WETT training.

### **1998-1999 Brian Palmateer**

Another significant event during the past 12 months was the assumption of the functions of ARWETO.

ARWETO’s escalating financial challenges prompted the ARWETO Board to approach WETT Inc. to have WETT assume the responsibilities of ARWETO. ARWETO in turn has dissolved its Board and the association is in suspense.

**October 1998** – pilot of new pellet course in Markham Ontario

### **New WEB Committee**

### **New Policy and Procedures and Occupational Analysis**

### **Article in WETT INK 1998**

“Along with the program changes to the existing Member Categories. The **new Basic Inspector Category** offers, for the first time, certification to Municipal, Insurance, and independent certificate holders. The other two categories, Associate and Affiliate, address the need to recognize the achievements of students who attend the WETT Program, but who don’t want to or can’t qualify for certification.

### **New Pellet Course**

### **Continuing Education Courses**

### **WETT Certified Basic Inspector**

The volunteers quickly realized that this new growth and demand for new courses, was not something they could spend any quality time on and needed assistance to move forward.

“**In April 1999**, the Board accepted a proposal from **John Gulland of Gulland Associates Inc.** to provide interim Executive Director services to WETT while the Board decided how it would restructure its Management Systems to improve the situation. With a professional working away on WETT critical issues, things began to happen fast. Within a few weeks, many of the course administrative and information documents had been updated.

Flow chart on the “**Paths to WETT Certification**” and “**What you need to know about WETT.**”

This handout is provided to all those entering the program.

## The Search for New Management

The Board has decided to begin the search for a new administrative and management home for WETT INC. Knowing that it needed to hire an executive director to manage course delivery and marketing programs as well as to develop a government relations program, and learning that its current management agency BB & C did not think that such a move would fit with its own corporate development plan, the Board began to look for a new administration team to look after its needs.

ARWETO, which is also managed from the BB & C offices, will remain there for the foreseeable future.

## 1999-2000 Marshall Byle

### President's Report

President Marshall Byle reported on some of the key highlights from the past 12 months. Over 150 students took the Code Compliance course in 2000, adding more members to the association. During 2000, revisions were made to the House Pressures course. The association hosted a new program supplied by HPBAC on running a profitable service department.

Exam marking has been passed from the National Office to the instructors to help save expenses. A new website was launched in the summer of 2000.

## Wood Heat Social Marketing Campaign

WETT has been working on a steering committee for a Marketing Campaign for Residential Wood Heating. This multi stakeholder committee consisting of representatives from Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada, Industry and other interested groups is working on developing a program to help reduce emissions caused by residential wood heat.

## New Management

In October of 1999 a new management company, Collins Communications & Management, with **Anthony Laycock** appointed Executive Director.

## Management Company

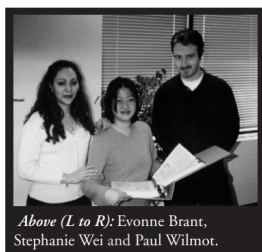
In October, WETT changed management services. WETT's new management company is Collins Communications & Management Ltd. Located in downtown Toronto, Collins Communications is a full service association management service providing service to 10 different associations.

If you have not already done so, please note our office address and phone number:

365 Bloor St., E., Suite 1807, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3L4. Local phone: 416-968-7718, toll free: 1-888-358-9388, and fax: 416-968-6818.

Anthony Laycock is your new Executive

Director. Working closely with the Board of Directors, Anthony is responsible for managing WETT's affairs. Evonne Brant serves as WETT's Registrar.

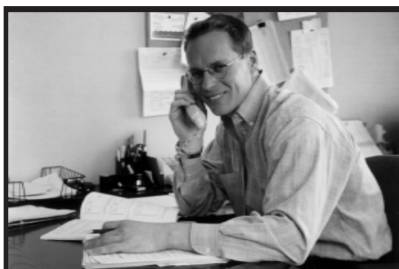


Above (L to R): Evonne Brant, Stephanie Wei and Paul Wilmot.

## Executive Director's Report

Well, first and foremost, I feel I must first introduce myself. Having just been named Executive Director in October, I have spent the last couple of months trying to familiarize myself with WETT and the industry as a whole. It has been quite a learning experience.

Luckily, I came to WETT with an understanding of the organization. Prior to becoming President of Collins Communications & Management (WETT's new management company), I spent 10 years with Insurers' Advisory Organization, Canada's largest loss control inspection firm. Having spent five years as Director of Marketing, followed by five years as Manager of Administration and Planning, I bring to WETT a strong multi-disciplined skill set.



Above: Anthony Laycock president of Collins Communications & Management.

## 2000-2001 George LeBlanc

**George:** Hi Anthony, it has been some years since we have spoken, tell me a bit about what you are up to these days?

**Anthony:** George, it is good to hear from you. Life rolls along well. Since leaving WETT and my other association clients in the good, capable hands with the Team at Funnel Communications (WETT's association

management company), I have been focusing on balance in my life. I continue to do some work in the agri-business sector managing several programs that biannually inspect all the Canadian facilities that store agri-chemicals and fertilizers. Other than that, I am logging thousands of kilometres hiking, one of my passions.

**George:** Tell me about some of your fondest memories of those first few years with WETT?

**Anthony:** That's easy – the people. The shared passion of Board members, Affiliates, committee members and instructors working to build the profile of WETT and advance the objectives of WETT was inspiring and energizing.

I still miss sharing a beer (or 2+) with the team after day-long meetings.

**George:** Evonne was with you in the beginning, and she is still with WETT. Tell me about how staff and Board members played a role, and you were able to guide us into those first few years?

**Anthony:** I was fortunate to have come into WETT with a pretty good knowledge of what WETT was all about. Having spent years working in senior management in the insurance inspection and engineering sector, I had an appreciation for the challenges WETT was working with. I also helped launch multiple self-regulatory inspection programs in the early nineties in the agri-business sector, which was a good reference point given WETT, in many ways, fills some regulatory gaps.

This knowledge, supported by the guidance of senior WETT members, helped me hit the ground running and really helped me narrow the focus of our Board members and committees towards clear achievable goals.

Having a board that is pan-Canadian and made up of various certificate holders (advisors, inspectors, installers, sweeps) provides a great, diverse experience base. I have always been a fan of evidence-based decision making and I took time and encouraged others to listen to opinions and consider all the facts and then work towards consensus. Granted there were tough meetings and varied opinions, all of which deserved to be heard, but with effort and compromise we moved forward. Without compromise things just stall.

From an administrative perspective, Evonne jumped in quickly and worked collaboratively with BB&C, fostering a smooth management transition. The team at Funnel embraced the challenge and, in the first few years, WETT saw tremendous growth in course delivery, membership and profile.

One of Funnel's guiding principles was to always remember that a volunteer's time is a gift. Much of the work done for WETT is by members who sit on the Board, Affiliate Boards, and committees, all of whom work as volunteers. We tried to always recognize the gift of their time.

**George:** We are celebrating WETT's 30-year anniversary this year. What would you like to pass on to all the WETT members that you got to meet and spend time with during your years as Executive Director?

**Anthony:** First and foremost, congratulations. 30 years is a significant milestone.

During my 20 years with WETT the level of growth was amazing. Growth in membership, professionalism and brand recognition has benefited all members and the clients they serve. The main advice I would like to instill in members is Pride. Take a second and be proud of what you do and what your association does for you.

You are delivering an essential service to the thousands of Canadians using solid-fuel-burning appliances. As a WETT-trained professional you are seen as the pros in your field. This is something that all members should be proud of. This pride should also show in all aspects of your work. The best way to further enhance the professionalism of your industry and the credibility of being a certificate holder is for collectively all members to take pride in your work. This alone would elevate the profession.

In addition, take pride in your professional association. WETT is more than just a course provider. WETT certification has become the standard which consumers, insurers, regulators, and other stakeholders have come to rely on. Building this standard requires more than just course delivery and continuing education. It requires that WETT continue to work towards increased professionalism and consistency to ensure, wherever you are in Canada, working with a WETT-trained professional provides a consumer with a consistent level of expertise, service, and professionalism.

#### **Any other words of Anthony Wisdom?**

Nah – I rambled on too much. Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to this article and thank you all for your support for the 20 years I served as Executive Director. I take Pride in the role that the team at Funnel Communications played in advancing the objectives of WETT.

#### **WETT sets new training record in 2001**

Province	Students	Courses
AB	82	11
BC	118	10
MB	66	5
NB	95	9
NL	0	0
NS	163	16
NT	11	3
ON	369	20
SK	0	0
YT	18	1
Total	922	75

Recommended use of WETT Trained Professionals to appear in Product Manuals.

At the last WETT Annual General Meeting, a series of meetings were held with Sue Kalish, Executive Director of the Hearth Education Foundation. Based in Arlington Virginia, the Hearth Education Foundation, with its partner the National Fireplace Institute (NFI), offers training programs throughout the United States.

One initiative immediately acted upon was a joint project to seek recognition and recommendation by manufacturers. In July, all the US and Canadian manufacturers were contacted and urged to start putting reference to NFI (in the US) and WETT (in Canada) into their manuals, catalogue sheets, brochures, product packaging and consumer materials.

Proper installation is essential for the safe, efficient use of wood-burning appliances and our correspondence encourages manufacturers to recognize this importance and to help consumers understand this by recommending proper installation by trained technicians. This recommendation in Canada is to use WETT-trained professionals. The WETT logo was supplied to all manufacturers for inclusion in their printed materials.

We will be monitoring the success of this initiative over the next couple of months.

There were several events that were important to me during my terms but none like the change we were about to move forward.

One of my most memorable moments was passing the torch to the first woman to lead and become WETT President, Vanessa Percival.

### **2002 - 2005 Vanessa Percival**



*Some Accomplishments Appeared in WETT INK 2005.*

The AGM for WETT National was held in BC, and thanks goes out to Zigi and WET-BC for hosting the event, which included a trade forum and education sessions.

**“New membership cards** were issued this past year and have received a great response from the membership. These new cards are graphically better and also are made from a heavier stock material that wears better. The inclusion of the members’ pictures make the card a good identification piece for consumers to easily identify a WETT-certified individual. I have seen more ID cards proudly displayed on members’ lapels in the past year than even before in the past, and it’s a great thing to see.

WETT continues to work with government on various Burn It Smart projects and we look forward to continuing our participation in this coming year. We also ventured to the United States to deliver sessions there. Thanks to all the members that have volunteered time to the BIS program across Canada.

### **Update on Canadian Environmental Protection Act and progress on National EPA type of regulation**

In early February Tex McLeod from the Hearth Patio and Barbecue Association of Canada (HPBAC), Ghyslaine Belanger from the Association des Professionnels du Chauffage (APC), and Anthony Laycock from WETT met with representatives from Environment Canada to review planned activities for 2005/06 pertaining to wood burning.

One of the primary activities being worked on by Environment Canada is the development of regulations for the sale of wood-burning appliances. The initial goal was to introduce legislation by 2005. This goal has not been met. Environment Canada (EC) has just submitted a report to the CCME (Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment).

As it turned out EC could not regulate wood-burning appliances nor could they find a legal home to regulate/limit sales to EPA rated models. Their recommendations include extending Canadian Environmental Protection Act's (CEPA) authority to include regulation at the point of sale. EC's proposed changes would allow the act to regulate at point of sale, products which when in use, emit toxins.

CEPA is up for its five-year review. Both EC and Health Canada have reviewed the current act and outlined some recommendations for change. These recommendations include the regulation of wood-burning appliance sales to be limited to EPA and/or CSA B415-rated appliances.

Following the submission of recommendations, limited public consultations have been taking place. The next step in the process is to review the results of this consultation and then present final recommendations to the Standing Committee of Environment and Sustainable Development. The standing committee will hold hearing to review proposed changes to the legislation.

HPBAC, APC and WETT actively participated in several subcommittees, which dealt with regulation issues. We have long been advocates of EPA type of legislation and are frustrated by the delays in seeing this introduced. We will be continuing to monitor this situation.

### **Interview in 2023 (21 years later)**

**George:** Vanessa, tell me how you got started in the hearth industry?

**Vanessa:** I started chimney sweeping in 1977. My partner at the time was a motorcycle mechanic, and in the off season, we went chimney sweeping together. This is back in the days when stove pipes would snake all through the house, and would have to be disassembled to clean thoroughly, and boy, would they be full of creosote! An enterprising friend decided to start selling Fisher stoves from the summer kitchen in his home, and he hired me to work for him. Everything I knew about wood heat came from Jay Shelton's book on wood heat. There wasn't much in the way of regulation or codes when I first started, and lots of problems with faulty installations, and chimney fires. I remember the first time I actually lifted a wood stove into the back of a half ton truck at an International Plowing Match...I remember clearly telling myself that I could do it, and I did. It

was the first of many, and although it may have been a simple task, at the time it seemed monumental to me and gave me a confidence boost that I was able to draw on far into the future.

**George:** Are you still involved in the industry?

**Vanessa:** I opened my own store in 1986, Embers, which is still in business and in the capable hands of Dylan Hamill. I sold Embers in 2008, not because I didn't love retail...I really did, but I had opened a distribution company, Urban Hearth in 2004, and it was just too busy running the two companies. I had the incredible good fortune to work with my partner, Mitch Preece and my children Amber, Sierra and Kingsley. I retired a few years ago and my daughter Amber took the helm, with my son Kingsley working at her side.

**George:** You are such an inspiration to many young women starting out in this male-dominated business. Tell me about that journey?

**Vanessa:** At the time that I opened my store, I had only heard of Jan Herald through visiting distributors and manufacturers, but just knowing another woman was doing it, and doing it well, gave me the extra little nudge to give it a go. I came to know Jan well later when she was with Tri-Lane Distributing, and admired her direct, honest and fair way of doing business. She was truly a force of nature and an inspiration to me. When Jan spoke, everyone listened. Her quiet strength, blazing eyes and encyclopaedic knowledge of codes were epic. She shared that knowledge freely and was always willing to answer a question or help interpret a code, I felt honoured to have worked with her. Over time I developed relationships with an amazing group of women in the industry that were sounding boards, support systems, mentors for each other and more importantly...friends.

You asked about being a woman in a male-dominated business. All I can say is it never occurred to me to let that stop me and nor should any woman that is in, or wants to be in the hearth industry. Surround yourself with the people that will create the support system you need to help you be successful.

**George:** You were the FIRST woman to serve as WETT President and I was proud to have the honour to pass the torch to you. Why did you get involved with the WETT program?

**Vanessa:** Over time I met John Gulland at various meetings, and when he called and asked if I would sit on the WETT Board I didn't have to consider it for long. I felt that it was important to give back to the Industry that was providing a living for me and my family, so agreed to it. I never regretted it. I met fabulous people with shared interest in wood heat and all of the issues surrounding it at the time...attaining EPA regulation, public education through Burn it Smart, working with Environment Canada and other interested partners. The experience, knowledge and relationships that came from my time working with WETT were completely beneficial to my business. For anyone wondering if it's worth it to volunteer to be on the WETT Board, I would say, just do it!

**George:** In closing, what would some of your fondest memories while working with WETT?

**Vanessa:** There are so many really wonderful memories that came from my time with WETT, but I think some of the best were while working on the Burn it Smart program with John Gulland and Mitch. Delivering the public seminars across the province gave me the opportunity to meet, work with and get to know some wonderful



WETT members. Travelling the province and demonstrating EPA technology brought the opportunity to develop stronger partnerships with building inspectors, and fire departments while educating homeowners. We laughed a lot, got heckled a fair amount and enjoyed every single moment of it. To this day, John and I remain good friends, a gift and tangible benefit of WETT's influence.

### **Nova Scotia's wood-heating appliance rebate program benefits everyone!**

From October 2, 2005, until August 31, 2007, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy is funding a rebate program focused on motivating homeowners who purchase wood-heating appliances to buy those meeting Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards.

Managed by WET-NS, this province-wide program provides Nova Scotia applicants who meet all program requirements with a \$200 rebate on their purchase. To be eligible, the wood-heating appliance must be a pellet appliance or EPA certified. It must be installed according to the manufacturer's installation instructions and CSA code B365, preferably by a Wood Energy Technical Training (WETT) certified installer.

The wood-heating appliance rebate program requires the applicant to be the registered owner of the household where the appliance is installed. The original receipt must be included with the application, proving the new appliance was purchased between October 12, 2005, and August 31, 2007. The applicant also must agree to a random inspection/audit by the Nova Scotia Department of Energy, its agents or auditors (including WET-NS) in the household where the appliance is installed.

Along with the \$200 rebate, the benefits to homeowners of purchasing an EPA-certified wood-burning appliance are numerous. When heating with an EPA-certified wood-burning appliance, they will burn less wood for more heat. This equals savings in fuel costs and less frequent refueling to maintain heat levels. When operated properly, an EPA-certified wood burning appliance produces virtually no smoke, which greatly benefits the home and the environment. And when using wood as a fuel source, homeowners are supporting one of Nova Scotia's renewable energy resources.

Participating in the wood-heating appliance rebate program is a benefit to everyone—savings to the homeowner, reduced smoke emissions in the environment, and support of a natural and renewable resource! This wood stove Changeout was recognized Canada wide and became the model for many Changeouts to follow.

We will end the article with some information related to one of the largest campaigns that promoted safe wood burning.

### **Burn it Smart — from 2005 WETT INK**

#### **Burn It Smart Directory Coming**

As part of WETT's involvement with the Burn It Smart program, we have been working with several other groups to produce materials to help consumers understand our industry and who they can call for information about wood burning.

Burn It Smart is a campaign, led by The Government of Canada, to promote safer, cleaner and more efficient wood-burning practices for those who heat their homes with wood, or use it for recreational purposes. Working with the program over the last couple of years, we have seen a need for a consistent directory to assist wood

burners to find the correct information source for their inquiries. Frequently, when consumers are looking for information on wood heating they are often unaware of where to direct their inquiry. To direct consumers to the correct information source we have developed directory of key agencies/service providers.

We will be sending these out in the coming months to all WETT members encouraging you to help support this initiative by placing this directory on your Website, in printing materials and by posting the poster cards. The poster cards are designed for display in shop windows, bulletin boards and other locations where wood burners may frequent.

All these initiatives are designed to heighten the professionalism of our industry and to communicate the importance of WETT training.

I hope everyone enjoys the article and look forward to completion of the 2006 to 2023 sessions to follow.

George LeBlanc and John Gulland

