



Canadian Bioenergy Association
1769 St. Laurent Boulevard, Suite 318
Ottawa, Ontario
K1G 5X7

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City of Montreal needs to re-think ban to ban all wood-burning stoves

The ongoing debate over a proposed bylaw to ban all wood-burning stoves in Montreal's homes is a case of one step forward, two steps back for the environment," says Douglas Bradley, President of the Canadian Bioenergy Association.

To cut down on smog caused by the 85,000 or so wood burning stoves and fireplaces now in Montreal homes, the City is consulting on a new bylaw to ban the installation of wood-burning appliances. The proposed bylaw would also forbid replacing existing woodstoves or fireplaces with new ones, unless they're wood-pellet or natural gas stoves.

The move is a step forward because older wood burning stoves that don't meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards are heavy air polluters – emitting 40 to 60 grams of particulate matter per hour. But it's a step backward because it treats all current wood burning appliances as the same. Modern stoves that meet EPA phase 2 standards emit only 4.1 grams. Wood pellet stoves emit about 1.2 grams per hour.

It also ignores the greenhouse gas savings that clean burning wood and pellet stoves provide. Using Canada's renewable wood resources to heat our homes, instead of fossil fuel resources like propane and natural gas, will cut down on greenhouse gas emissions and create new jobs in the forest sector through establishment of pellet manufacturing supply chain, and the wider use of renewable forest resources.

Canada's wood heating sector is in transition – provincial governments are far too slow to permit state-of-the-art European and Canadian-manufactured wood chip and pellet boilers, with up to 90 percent efficiencies, from entering the market.

During this transition phase, CANBIO recommends Montreal continue to allow its homeowners to buy modern wood stoves that meet strict EPA standards. It should also mandate owners of older, inefficient wood stoves, and outdoor furnaces to replace them with modern pellet boilers within five years. This should be supported through an exchange program that offers a rebate of at least \$800.00. As it stands, the bylaw effectively pushes them to keep their old appliances churning out heavy particulates for years to come.

Burning clean dry wood or wood pellets in modern stoves is economical for Montreal residents, good for the environment and great for creating a new renewable energy economy to prop up Canada's fledgling forest industry. Many Canadian consumers view wood as a homegrown, robust heating source and prefer it over fossil fuels – let's help them support our national industry, combat climate change and reduce air pollution.

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Douglas Bradley and Christopher Rees are available for media interviews and commentary.

CONTACT: Crystal Luxmore, public relations, tel: 647-239-5899, crystal_luxmore@hotmail.com
Douglas Bradley, president CANBIO, tel: 613-882-1768, douglas.bradley@rogers.com
Christopher Rees, CANBIO Director Ontario, tel: 705-724-1600 cell: 705-493-0772,
creees@xplornet.com