

**Media Release**

Attn: News, Home, Energy, Environment Editors and Reporters

## **The Wood Heat Policy Institute advocates for the responsible use of wood as fuel**

***The merits of one of Canada's most important renewable energy resources are under appreciated***

(September 26, 2008) As home heating fuel prices rise, tens of thousands of Canadian householders will be soon turning to firewood to cut heating costs. Many will be new to wood heating and others will be returning to the use of wood as a home heating fuel.

While heating with wood appears deceptively simple, there are many myths and much outdated, incomplete and just plain inaccurate information around wood burning.

The Wood Heat Policy Institute (WHPI) has been formed as a platform for communicating the best and most accurate information and science about the many benefits of wood heating to individual households, to the environment and to society in general.

The Wood Heat Policy Institute (WHPI) supports the public interest in wood heating and advocates for its responsible use. WHPI is a source of credible information and analysis of wood heating-related issues. It also supports government and non-governmental organizations in policy development regarding this important renewable energy resource. The Institute is an outreach initiative of the Wood Heat Organization (WHO). WHO has provided independent, non-commercial advice to householders using or considering the use of wood heat since 1996, mainly through its web site at [www.woodheat.org](http://www.woodheat.org).

“Our role is not to promote wood heating,” says WHPI director John Gulland, “but rather to support and defend its responsible use.” The group views wood heating as a lifestyle choice as well as a heating fuel option and therefore avoids promoting it. “Besides,” says Gulland, “we know from experience that wood heating is not for everyone.” The WHPI’s role is to speak up for the Canadian families that choose to heat with wood, and to define and promote responsible wood heating. The Institute defines responsible wood heating as starting with a safe, code-compliant installation of an EPA certified, advanced combustion wood stove, fireplace or furnace. The definition also includes users that burn only seasoned firewood and use burn practices that result in little or no visible smoke. More information can be found at [www.woodheat.org/whpi.htm](http://www.woodheat.org/whpi.htm)

Although rarely discussed in strategic terms, firewood is not a fringe fuel, but rather is a mainstream heating fuel, used in almost 3.2 million homes or 26 percent of the Canadian total. Not surprisingly, wood heating is used mostly in small town and rural households.

Wood is arguably the most accessible and affordable renewable energy resource for home heating in most of Canada. Its use can help Canada to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because its net carbon dioxide emissions are far below those of all other fuels. It provides heating security during electrical power failures. Its use strengthens the rural economies where wood heating is most prevalent because wood cut and used locally means money does not leave the community to pay for oil and gas.

“Wood is not a perfect fuel”, says Gulland, “but there is no such thing. All fuel burning causes environmental impacts.”

The most often cited impact, is from old-style wood heating and is seen as point-of-use smoke emissions. The new advanced technology wood stoves, fireplaces and furnaces can burn with no visible smoke and ninety per cent less pollution than appliances of twenty years ago.

When various energy sources are assessed according to their environmental impacts, the entire fuel cycle should be considered. The serious environmental impacts of fuel oil and natural gas consumption are largely ignored, partly because most occur upstream during production, refining and transportation. The greenhouse gases released when houses are heated with oil and gas are easy to ignore because they are invisible.

Although wood is a good fuel with advantages for individual families and for Canada, it is not a good fuel for all families in all regions. For example, wood is not a good fuel for serious heating in multi-family dwellings or in the downtown core of our large cities. Wood is best used as a fuel outside cities, in small towns and rural areas, where the cost of firewood and population density are lower.

Wood heating is practiced on a small scale, the fuel is usually harvested from a local resource, and the users gain a more complete understanding of their impacts on the environment than users of other energy sources. As environmentalists have suggested, these are some of the very features needed for economic and environmental sustainability. Canadians who heat their homes with wood responsibly should be recognized for their contribution to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a sustainable energy future.

**For more information, contact:**

**John Gulland**

**whpi(at)woodheat.org**

**613.757.2290 or 757-2208**

**[www.woodheat.org/whpi.htm](http://www.woodheat.org/whpi.htm)**

*The Wood Heat Policy Institute (WHPI) supports the public interest in wood heating and advocates for the responsible use of this important renewable energy resource. WHPI is a source of credible information and analysis of wood heating related issues. It also supports government and non-governmental organizations in policy development related to wood heating. The Institute is an outreach initiative of the Wood Heat Organization (WHO). WHO has provided independent, non-commercial advice to householders interested in the use of wood heat since 1996.*