

# THE CANADIAN WAY OF CHEAPER, GREENER HEATING

If you dread the upcoming heating season because of the high cost of keeping your home warm, your worries are legitimate. That said, there is a heating alternative that costs less than oil, gas or electricity, and it's better for the environment. It's a form of wood heating, but before you write the idea off as primitive and labour intensive, let me show you why that's not the case. Heating with wood pellets is convenient and tidy. Burning pellets can also reduce your heating bills substantially, and there's a simple Canadian invention that makes this option more accessible and economical than ever.

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## **HEATING WITH WOOD WASTE**

Take waste wood from flooring plants, furniture shops and other industrial facilities, grind it up into sawdust, and then press it into tiny cylinders. This is how wood heating pellets are manufactured, and the process is growing in popularity as progressive homeowners and nations seek to move away from fossil fuels. Burning wood pellets handle a large and growing part of heating needs in Scandinavian countries, for instance, and pellets imported from Canada are part of their mix. Closer to home, I've seen interest in heating with wood pellets



explode over the last 10 years. When I bought my own pellet stove in 2004, there was only one place to buy pellets locally and no other home in my neighbourhood burned them. Now you can buy heating pellets at hardware stores and building supply yards everywhere, with dozens of people using them. People like the fact that bagged pellets are easier to handle than firewood, they like the cheery glow of a wood fire and they like the fact that burning wood doesn't contribute to the greenhouse effect. However, there is one perennial problem with wood pellets; the cost and complexity of dedicated pellet stoves makes them expensive and sometimes tricky to operate. This is where a Canadian innovation can help.

## **BURNING PELLETS IN A WOODSTOVE**

Brad Palmer had pleasant boyhood experiences with wood burning stoves, but when he tried to make wood heating

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part of his city life in London, Ontario, it didn't work for him. Finding, storing and handling firewood was the problem, and that's why he looked to wood pellets rather than give up on wood. But instead of paying a lot of money for a pellet stove, Brad invented a stainless steel grate that fits into his ordinary woodstove. He calls it the Bradley Burner ([www.bradleyburner.com](http://www.bradleyburner.com); 877-746-7764) and it allows air into a pile of pellets so they burn cleanly in any standard woodstove. At \$200, the price does seem steep, but it's roughly 10% the cost of a pellet stove and the grate is impressively made from thick sections of stainless steel.

*“ Sooner or later we'll be forced to wean ourselves off fossil fuels, and the adjustments we'll have to make as a society will be huge. ”*

Brad's a little guy with a family and day job, and I wrote about his invention when it first came out a few years ago. He's since improved his design to include an additional grate layer to allow more air into the pile, fostering better combustion. He makes it a point to call all purchasers, and so far I'm told every one of them is happy.

Pile the pellets on top of the grate as it sits in the bottom of a woodstove, get the pellets burning with starter fluid, then sit back and warm yourself. Air gets into the pellets in a way that supports clean, complete combustion that couldn't happen without the grate. If you ever want to burn regular firewood again, let the grate cool, remove

it, kindle a cordwood fire, then sit by the cheery glow.

Sooner or later escalating prices will wean us all off fossil fuels, and the adjustments we'll have to make as a society will be huge. Some of these changes will depend on advanced technologies, while others will happen as simple, sustainable solutions make it into our everyday lives.



Steve Maxwell, syndicated home improvement and woodworking columnist, has shared his DIY tips, how-to videos and product reviews since 1988. Follow "Canada's Handiest Man" at [SteveMaxwell.ca](http://SteveMaxwell.ca), Facebook or @Maxwells\_Tips on Twitter.

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