

THE CANADIAN WOOD PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines the word “Association” as “*a group of people organized for a joint purpose*”. On November 20, 1979, a *group* of individuals assembled in Vancouver for the *purpose of organizing* an Association that would benefit all Canadians interested in wood preservation. I am sure that you have surmised that I am referring to the Canadian Wood Preservation Association.

What inspired those organizers to pursue this idea of forming an Association at that time? After all, wood preservation had been around in Canada for about a century prior to that inaugural meeting. Before then, the American Wood Preservers Association had served as a reliable source for technical information for the wood preserving industry and the users of treated wood. Why, in 1979 was it concluded that forming a Canadian Association was the right thing to do? What purpose would it serve?

To help answer these questions, I would like to read an excerpt from the proceedings of the first annual conference of the CWPA. This meeting was held in Montreal, on November 4th, 1980. Under the opening heading, “Historical”, it explains the vision of the CWPA organizers. You will probably note that this mission statement is an early form of the updated statement that currently appears on the CWPA website. It reads as follows;

“The Association was formed to provide a forum and focal point for all people interested in the various aspects of wood preservation, from the producer of pressure-treated poles to the remedial pest control operator concerned with an outbreak of dry rot in a house. All are dedicated to the conservation of Canada’s greatest and most valuable naturally renewable resource, its forest products. With Canada’s expanding interests and diversification in wood products and with its human expertise in research and development, the CWPA will provide a common ground for professional and social discussion.”

This may sound like a rather generic statement, but it does embody a conflation of concerns and issues. In the opening sentence, it stressed that the Association was intended to benefit all people. For those of you, who have attended our yearly conferences on a regular basis, you know that the word “*all*” encompasses a diverse collection of individuals from local, national and international interest groups. Glancing through a past conference attendance list attests to this fact.

At last year’s conference in Vancouver, there was representation from several academic and research institutions. There were chemical suppliers and ones who work in the wood treating industry. There were consultants, representatives from government agencies,

members of the retail sector, as well as individuals from various user groups, such as private and public utilities. We also had several guests, who are members of other organizations that deal with wood preservation. Representation from such a variety of interest groups emphasizes the valuable role that the CWPA has played in the dissemination of technical information related to wood protection.

The CWPA is a registered, non-profit Association that is governed by a set of By-Laws that have been approved by the Minister of Corporate and Consumer Affairs. Oversight of the Association is provided by an elected Board of Directors, who, contribute their time and effort in managing the affairs of the Association. The life-blood of the CWPA is its membership. Without your allegiance and support, the Association would not exist.

In regards to membership, there are three categories, which are defined on the CWPA website as follows;

Full membership: is designated for those persons who are engaged in one or more aspects of wood preservation as their primary working activity. Typical activities include: manufacturing and/or developing wood preservative chemicals or methods, operating and/or designing wood treatment facilities, investigating wood decay mechanisms in a research facility (excluding post graduate students), consulting on the use of preserved wood, inspecting preserved wood and brokering preserved lumber. Full members can vote at General Meetings and can serve on the Board of Directors of the CWPA, they receive newsletters and the annual Proceedings, and pay a reduced attendance fee for the Annual Meeting.

Associate membership: is designated for persons who have an interest in wood preservation as part of their professional activities, for example: architects and civil engineers, builders and regulatory personnel. The objective of Associate Membership is to allow such persons to keep abreast in the developments in wood preservation science and industry. Associate Members have the same rights and privileges as Regular Members, except that they cannot vote at meetings nor hold any office in the Association.

Student membership: this category of membership is extended to students in institutes of higher learning undertaking an appropriate course of study or research. Student Members are usually enrolled in MSc or PhD programs, although interested undergraduate students are encouraged to avail themselves of this type of membership. Student Members have the same rights and privileges as Regular Members, except that they cannot vote at meetings nor hold any office in the Association.

There is one benefit that the CWPA offers that is only available to students. This is the **Robert W. Stephen's Memorial Award**, which is named after one of the founders of the CWPA. This award is available to young scientists (grad students, post doctoral fellows or beginning scientists) involved in research relevant to the aims of the association. The award supports travel and attendance costs for young scientists to present the results of their research at the annual CWPA convention.

The CWPA is also governed by a number of well established principles that are carefully adhered to. It is very important that all who attend our annual conferences as members or guests recognize and appreciate that the CWPA is not a forum for advertising particular products or their manufacturers. At the same time, manufacturers and applicators of wood treatments are encouraged to share their test results and noteworthy accomplishments that maybe of interest to the membership. How does the audience know that the information being presented on this platform is accurate and not exaggerated? Well, one of the benefits of allowing questions after a presentation is that it serves as positive peer pressure. Our professors and research scientists in the audience are not the type to sit still and let exaggerations or false claims go unchallenged.

This relates to the **aims and objectives** of the CWPA. Referring back at the first conference proceedings, it explained these aims and objectives as;

“The advancement of knowledge and expertise in the various aspects of wood preservation, including pressure and non pressure treatments, dip and spray treatments for control of stain and mould, fire retardants, remedial treatments for existing decay and other methods of wood preservation.”

“The promotion of high standards of technology in wood preservation, and the encouragement of good building practices for the protection of wood in service.”

“The provision of information and technical services to its members.”

The key phrase that is echoed in these aims and objectives is *“the advancement of knowledge”*. Over the years, the CWPA has endeavoured to meet this goal. The principle means of doing so is through our annual conference programs. A great deal of time and effort is expended by the Board of Directors in putting together a program that addresses the needs and interests of all who attend our yearly meetings. As you can appreciate, the success of any conference greatly depends on the self-sacrificing efforts of presenters. They give of their time and effort in preparing and delivering presentations that are designed to work in harmony with the aims and objectives of the Association.

The newsletters that members receive during the year are another means of sharing new developments or points of interest. There is also our recently released compendium that serves as an excellent tool for locating or identifying information on a particular subject that was discussed during a previous conference program.

There is one more benefit of attending the yearly conferences of the CWPA that I would be amiss not to mention. This is the association that ones can enjoy within the association. During our breaks or social activities that you may enjoy in the evenings, there is an opportunity to share experiences and ideas in informal discussions. Ones have found this to be an extremely valuable avenue of broadening ones knowledge in the practical application of the wood preservatives and treated wood products.

In conclusion, the CWPA has enjoyed 27 years of success. It has weathered several storms caused by ones intent on discrediting the value of treated wood. At the same time, it has served as a strong voice for positive change. As explained in the CWPA mission

statement, it has and will continue to serve as a forum for all interested in the conservation of Canada's greatest and most valuable naturally renewable resource, its forest products.