

# ProductFocus

Retailers appreciate Enviro's diversified lineup of fireplaces and stoves.

BY SHARON SANDERS

MY TURN

Enviro



There is something to be said for a company that doesn't seek the spotlight, but ends up in the spotlight anyway. Enviro®/Sherwood Industries Ltd. (Victoria, British Columbia) is one of those companies because it knows how to build hearth products that people want (and love). Enviro has managed to hit the mark with all of its products since it came onto the scene in 1989. While it has flown under the radar for many years, its new focus is causing the hearth industry to take notice.

Cherbel Yousief, president and CEO, describes how Enviro has evolved from a wood/pellet-appliance manufacturer into a full-line hearth company. "We were the first to pioneer bringing pellet stoves into Europe. Ours were the stoves of choice because of their quality—and the fact that they could burn a variety of fuels, including crushed walnut and almond shells. We were the largest player in Europe for many years," he explains.

Once regulations started to tighten in Europe, Enviro began to focus on growing in North America. Initially, it continued on its path as a pellet-stove manufacturer (known for its solid products and customer service), but eventually, the time came for broader ventures. Yousief says, "The pellet segment was the springboard to get us into the market, but things have taken a different turn, and we are changing for the better."

In 2014, the company broadened its offerings to include gas fireplaces, introducing five models. "We hit it out of the park with all five," Yousief says. "It confirms that we are



The C34 fireplace, with a log set and a ledgestone liner



The C60 fireplace, with a log set and a fluted liner

not just a pellet-stove manufacturer. We are serious about creating great products in an innovative way." He adds that Enviro's successful foray into the gas category has been one of its defining moments.

The expanded focus not only has appealed to longtime Enviro dealers, but has opened the door to some other dealers who see the company in a new light. "Now that we have a broad product range, dealers can rely on us to supply a complete product line," Yousief notes.

In 2017, Enviro jumped into modern design with a full line of linear gas fireplaces—including the C34, C44, and C60, all of which have done well for retailers. For 2018, the company is introducing five new gas

products: a 72-inch linear fireplace (C72) that will be the biggest unit in its linear lineup, two large fireplaces (Q5 and Q6), and two high-end fireplace inserts (EX32 and EX35) that round out its insert offerings.

Gas sales have steadily taken on a life of their own. Yousief says, "I can comfortably say that gas-product sales have surpassed our pellet-product sales by 30% in just a short time—which is huge, when one realizes that we are a business that built its reputation on pellet products."

Enviro considers itself a company that relates to its dealers, which is one reason that it is able to develop products that sell through for dealers. Yousief explains, "We are a small company, so we have the luxury of being able



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to tailor our products for our dealers. When we develop new models, we consider everything from how easy they will be to install and service to how simple they will be to operate.”

When Enviro does research for new products, it is eager to get dealers involved in the process. “We draw on their experience for ideas, build the product, and then have them tinker with it a little bit, so they can almost sign off on it for us,” Yousief reports. He adds that dealer involvement in the research/development process is effective, in part, because it lets the company know what’s needed in different regions.

Enviro is constantly working on better ways to partner with its dealers. “We don’t want just to give them products to sell; we



The C44 fireplace, with a log set and a ledgestone liner

are committed to coming up with incentives and programs that drive consumers to their showrooms,” Yousief explains. Among the best-received ideas have been conducting coupon programs and offering a free item (blower, door, or vent kit) with a purchase.

Over the years, the company has assembled a strong network of distributors to sell its products, and it considers the network a key to its steady growth. Yousief says, “We wouldn’t be where we are today without them. They have strong relationships with dealers, they know our products, and they work hard to get the right products into the hands of the right dealers. Distributors are a part of the backbone of our company because they understand the needs of small businesses.”

Yousief and his business partner, Stuart O’Connor, see extreme value in maintaining a personal connection with dealers as well. “We make it a priority to be accessible at all times. If they call us, they get through to us. If they send us an email, we get back to them the same day,” Yousief says. “Dealers will be motivated to sell products from companies they know will give them 100% support. Our distributors are as service oriented as we are, so by working together, dealers have an amazing resource for getting personal product/service support. It makes them feel that they are part of the family.”

In 2017, Enviro has seen an increase in sales and has performed above expectations. It is working to hit a 21% increase for autumn and hopes to round out the year with growth of close to 30%. “Dealers have been busier this year than I’ve seen them in the past several years,” Yousief explains.

The company has ambitious plans for 2018. It hopes to raise its profile in the industry as it pushes forward its new image as a full-line hearth company. In the short term, it plans to invest heavily in product research/development and has started a separate team focused exclusively on gas products. “We want to continue creating innovative products that hit the mark on all fronts for dealers. If there were a checklist of 10 things that dealers want in a fireplace or stove, we would want them to be able to check off all 10,” Yousief says.

The company is also investing in equipment that makes its operation more efficient. Yousief predicts, “A key factor for our growth is going to be our ability to manufacture products more frequently, so we don’t overburden our distributors with inventory. If they are able to turn inventory quickly, they will be able to offer more new products to our dealers. This will make us stronger in the market.”

Over the long term, the company intends to diversify. Yousief says, “We have a couple of ideas that will come into play in the next few years. We want to be diversified within the industry so we can continue to grow our business.” ■