

WORTHY OF RECOGNITION

Longest serving board member in B.C. chapter's history honoured for contributions to healthcare engineering



▲ LEFT TO RIGHT: Mark Bertulli of Dubois Chemicals (award sponsor) with Steve McTaggart and CHES National president Craig Doerksen.

For the second time in less than two years, Steve McTaggart has taken to a stage to accept an award bestowed in his honour. In spring 2022, the longtime CHES member was recognized as the first-ever recipient of the CHES B.C. Healthcare Award for his contribution to healthcare engineering in British Columbia. This past September, McTaggart made his way onto the podium during the CHES national conference gala banquet to accept the Hans Burgers Award, which, similar to the B.C. chapter distinction, recognizes outstanding achievement in the field of healthcare engineering. ‘Humbled’ to join the names of others before him like Mitch Weimer, who was among those that nominated the industry veteran, that’s not the word that came to

McTaggart’s mind when notified of the accolade.

“I was quite surprised, so much so that I asked CHES National president Craig Doerksen if he was sure he had the right guy,” he says.

A dedicated CHES member since the formation of the B.C. chapter more than 20 years ago, McTaggart has spent countless hours volunteering for the organization at both the provincial and national level. He is the longest serving board member in CHES B.C.’s history; has held every position on the chapter executive, with the exception of secretary, including two stints as chapter chair; has participated in national committees like professional development; was the driving force behind the growth of the chap-

ter’s annual spring conference, as well as its relocation to Whistler in 2010; and played a pivotal role in the success of three CHES National conferences held in the province.

But his biggest accomplishments, says McTaggart, were assisting with the set-up of chapter-supported student bursaries and the establishment of CHES B.C.’s grassroots program. The initiative provides targeted funding to aid frontline healthcare workers unable to obtain financial assistance from their facility to attend the chapter conference.

“The grassroots program has helped increase chapter membership, while providing educational opportunities to people who may not have been able to attend the conference,” he says.

Like many, McTaggart's involvement in CHES happened by chance. Originally a member of the British Columbia Hospital Maintenance and Engineers Association (BCHMEA), he became part of the CHES family when BCHMEA joined the organization to ultimately become the B.C. chapter. His initial interest was the networking and learning opportunities offered, but soon after he realized the benefits of greater involvement.

McTaggart's career in the healthcare industry was also unplanned. A young father in need of work to support his growing family, he learned of a position at Surrey Memorial Hospital from his stepmother. He started off employed in the kitchen and housekeeping department, during which time he took the occasion to better his education and skills. In 1984, McTaggart successfully obtained his power engineering degree from the British Columbia Institute of Technology, setting him up to rise through the hospital's ranks to become chief engineer in the late 1990s.

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In the early 2000s, McTaggart moved to Chilliwack General Hospital, where he was manager of plant services before the position expanded to include overseeing construction, too, at both Peace Arch Hospital in Whiterock, B.C., and Delta Hospital. After several years, he was tapped to take on the role of senior manager of facilities maintenance and operations at the hospital where his career in the healthcare industry began, Surrey Memorial Hospital, which was in the midst of one of the largest brown-field redevelopments in Canada.

“It's definitely a project you don't soon forget,” he says.

After a storied career in the publicly-funded healthcare industry, McTaggart

retired in 2019; however, he hasn't hung up his hat, so to speak. Rather, he simply changed sectors and is now the general manager at Eco-Air Systems (EAS), a commercial and industrial HVAC contractor in Langley, B.C. When asked why he made the move, his answer undoubtedly makes sense.

“I wanted the opportunity to work with my son,” he says about Chris McTaggart, who owns EAS.

With the transition, he has pared back on work so that he's only going into the office three days a week. This allows him to indulge in some of his favourite past-times, from going to the gym to travelling and, of course, catching up with friends (those from CHES included) over a beer. ■

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