

NO IFS, ANDS OR BUTTS

Look down - way down. What do you see when you visit businesses, shopping malls, parks, beaches or walking trails? We are often greeted by cigarette butts littering our communities, our pristine forest trails and our sandy beaches. We also see butt litter near grassy road sides or slowly trickling down to our water drains.

Cigarette butts are ranked as one of Canada's leading causes of litter. Cigarette filters are made of plastic so they can take up to fifteen years to bio-degrade. That means there are cigarette filters hanging around today that may even be from the 90s! Filters contain 160 toxic chemicals of which 60 can cause cancer and when they get wet those toxins can leach into our natural environment.

Our hot, dry summers in combination with a forested landscape make us especially vulnerable to forest fires that destroy much of our pristine wilderness and put our communities at risk. Province wide, since January 1, 2015 there have been a total of 279 fires attributed to smoking materials with total losses at almost \$2.8 million. Are all fires caused by cigarette butts carelessly flung from a hand? No, but many have been caused by discarded cigarettes. The Barriere fire in 2003 is one example of fire caused by a cigarette - seventy homes and twenty six thousand hectares of forest were destroyed.

It's concerning that some people continue to throw their still glowing cigarettes out of car windows or toss butts on the ground. So how can we address this and change the way we think and dispose of cigarette butts in a responsible way?

If you are a smoker and you are not ready to quit then the next best thing you can do is be responsible with your butts. There are safer ways to dispose of cigarette butts. You might choose to keep a water filled container in your car to help make sure the burning butt is out. If you are out and about in the forest or on the street use a small tin container to collect your butts. Those small metal mint tins work great. If you are hiking, pack the extinguished butts in and out with the rest of your garbage.

Please take personal responsibility for your butts – help prevent forest fires and protect our communities, our environment, and our wildlife.