



## What's Wrong With Litter ?

Litter is an important issue to residents in the City of Cambridge:

- It's a basic measure of respect and responsibility, community pride, and quality of life.
- It reduces the appeal of places and affects property values.
- It attracts nuisance animals and provides a breeding ground for pests that can cause disease.
- It can kill animals.
- It can impact water quality.
- It can block the City's drainage and contribute to flooding.
- It can pose hazards when it involves broken glass and other sharp objects.
- It costs us! The City of Cambridge's 2005 budget included over \$200,000 for cleanup, including pickup and disposal of large items dumped on roadsides.



## What Goes Around Stays Around ...

ITEM	ESTIMATED TIME TO BREAK DOWN
Piece of Paper	2-4 weeks
Fast food cups	1-100 years
Cigarette butt filter	10-40 years
Plastic bottle	50-100 years
Plastic Packaging	50-100 years
Tin or Steel Can	100 years
Diapers	100 years
Aluminum Can	300 years
Plastic Six-Pack Holder	450 years
Glass Bottle	1 Million Years
Oil	1 litre can contaminate 1 million litres of groundwater

## Litterbug Misconceptions and Reality

**"...there will always be someone to pick up after me..."**

Community-minded volunteers would rather do other good works than pick up litter.

**"...I pay taxes to have someone pick up after me...it's the City's problem..."**

It costs too much already! Even if litter control efforts were doubled, this would still be an "end-of-the-pipe" solution...dealing with the problem after-the-fact. Litter starts, and has to stop, with the behaviour of the litterbug.

**"...highschool students have to put in volunteer hours - they can pick up after me..."**

Volunteerism in highschool is about making community contributions, learning skills, and making connections and friends. Students have better things to do than pick up after YOU!

## Litter in Cambridge

A July 2005 Council report ("*Litter Program – Status Report*") noted the following about litter in Cambridge:

- 26 tonnes of roadside debris (litter) had been picked up in just the first six months of the year.
- \$200,000 spent on litter (Toronto spends \$20 million annually)
- Many complaints are received after the first spring melt about the valleys, downtown cores, and school grounds.
- The litter collected consisted of coffee cups and bags, fast food refuse, cigarette wrappers and packages, and plastic bottles.

## Litter Reduction in Cambridge

The Litter Reduction Task Force developed a campaign to promote anti-littering behaviour - "*The Only Cure For Litter is You.*" Each year hundreds of volunteers help out in through clean-ups of our neighbourhoods and natural areas. The reality is litter is as much a social problem as it is environmental, it's as much about attitude as it is about behaviour.

**YOU Can Do It!**  
 "80 percent of residents were concerned about litter, yet almost half admitted to littering themselves at least once in the last six months" (recent Canadian survey)



1. Set an example by not littering.
2. Ask people to pick up their litter.
3. Use a litterbag in the car.
4. Keep your yard clean and free of things that can blow into the street and become litter.
5. When visiting public places remember to TAKE OUT WHAT YOU BRING IN.
6. Organize or participate in a community clean up project.

## The Earth, My Ashtray

Cigarette butt filters can take decades to biodegrade, and each year, Canadian smokers toss away nearly 8,000 tonnes of butts. One in every five items collected during beach clean-ups is a cigarette butt, making it the most prevalent form of litter on earth. Many smokers don't consider cigarette butts as litter; many are dropped within 3 metres of an ashtray, thrown out of moving cars causing dangerous situations for other vehicles, and often ashtrays are emptied in parking lots. Smokers have to take personal responsibility for their own cigarette litter and encourage others to do the same.

## City Green Strategy

City Green Strategy is a local volunteer group and sub-committee of the Cambridge Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC).

City Green welcomes volunteers with organizational skills, project ideas and an interest in the environment. City Green volunteers coordinate community cleanups every year, plan an annual environmental workshop, publish articles on a variety of subjects, and conduct in-the-ground projects such as tree planting, plant rescues, and invasive species control.

For more information about City Green Strategy contact Paul Willms at 519.740.4650 ext. 4559 or email willmsp@cambridge.ca