

Plastic bags and cigarette butts: new data from TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup finds perception “butts” reality

Majority of Canadians (52%) are taking environmental action because it is “just something I do,” while one in five (20%) credit the media for inspiring them to be environmentally-friendly

TORONTO, August 20, 2008 — Nearly half of Canadians (49%) believe plastic bags are the number one pollutant on our shorelines according to new survey findings from the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, despite the fact cigarette butts are consistently the number one item recovered during the annual cleanup. The survey found only 18% of Canadians believe cigarette butts are the top culprit affecting our shorelines.

“Cigarette butts pose a significant danger to wildlife, yet for some reason many Canadians don’t think of them as litter,” said Eric Solomon, Vice President of Conservation, Research and Education, Vancouver Aquarium. During last year’s TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, participants removed more than 270,000 cigarette butts from shorelines.

One of the largest annual shoreline cleanups in the world, over 50,000 Canadians participated in last year’s TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup and this year organizers are hoping for 70,000 volunteers to help protect the environment and wildlife by removing garbage from our shorelines. Running from September 20-28, 2008 at more than 1,000 cleanup sites across the country, this national event invites volunteers to participate by removing harmful waste from around local ponds, streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans.

“Canada is home to the world’s largest freshwater supply and yet keeping our waters safe and unspoiled is still not a priority for most Canadians,” said Roger St. Louis, Regional Manager, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. “We collected nearly 90 tonnes of garbage during last year’s TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup – and unfortunately, we’ll recover even more this year.”

Help is on the way

Are Canadians walking the talk? The survey found that one in five (22%) Canadians say they’re volunteering on a monthly basis to make their community more environmentally-friendly, with BC and Alberta residents most likely to volunteer each month, at 34% each.

Besides volunteering, more than half (58%) of Canadians say they are taking deliberate action to reduce their impact on the environment by disposing of waste properly and recycling. Canadians 55 and over are the country’s most active recyclers (69%) compared to less than half (46%) of Canadians aged 18-34. Regionally, residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (70%) are the most likely to recycle and dispose of waste properly.

Canadians say they are also reducing energy consumption by turning off lights and electronics (16%) and driving less (12%). However, only 7% of Canadians say they are purchasing products with less packaging and only 4% are buying organic/locally grown foods.

“Half of Canadians say they’re being environmentally-friendly because it’s ‘just something they do’,” reported Solomon. “Clearly Canadians have the environment on their minds and many are taking personal action to make a difference. The TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup is a great way to get started.”

Top Environmental Issues

When asked to rank environmental issues facing Canada in order of importance:

- More than one third (37%) of Canadians say that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is their top environmental concern;
- One in four (25%) say improving air quality is their most pressing environmental issue; in Ontario 31% say it is a crucial issue;
- Twenty per cent of Canadians feel that conserving our forest, protecting our wildlife and creating more parks and green spaces is a priority;
- Sixteen per cent of Canadians say that our shorelines are an environmental priority with Maritimers and Albertans (23% each) placing the most emphasis on our shores.

“We’re celebrating the 15th anniversary of the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup – a perfect occasion to inspire and unite Canadians to take action and help clean up our lakes, rivers and streams,” continued St. Louis. “We can make a difference together to ensure our shorelines are both safe for plants and animals and beautiful to enjoy for future generations.”

About the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup

TD Bank Financial Group has been a proud sponsor of the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, a Vancouver Aquarium conservation program, through its TD Friends of the Environment Foundation for more than 12 years. In 2007, a record-breaking 50,000 volunteers participated in the national cleanup and removed 87,489 kilograms of garbage from 1,240 sites spanning a collective distance of 1,772 kilometres. Now in its 15th year, this year’s TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup takes place from September 20-28, 2008. To register, visit www.vanaqua.org/cleanup.

About the Survey

The TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup survey was conducted by Angus Reid Strategies on June 26, 2008 among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,007 Canadians 18+. The maximum margin of error is +/- 3.1% 19 times out of 20.

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