

Solution for recycling e-cigarettes in the works

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In recent years, the popularity of electronic cigarettes has risen significantly, creating the current and pressing issue of finding recycling methods for generated waste, as opposed to sending it off to the landfill.

TerraCycle, a business aimed at recycling non-recyclable products, has created a project to help deal with the growing issue of e-cigarette waste.

Their solution, called "Smoke Free Recycling Program" is a free initiative open to anyone over the age of 19 in which they can send in or drop off their HEET sticks, VEEV devices and cartridges/pods to be recycled.

The waste will be repurposed to make new products from the recycled material.

"The long-term goal is really to collect and recycle as high a percentage of these products as possible," says Tom Skazy, the CEO of TerraCycle. "With the program just launching, the collection rates will be lower as people become aware of it, so it's first [about changing] behavior and then it's about absolute scale of the program."

Skazy noted how the sale of e-cigarettes has multiplied around 400 per cent in the past five years, and with many deciding to make the switch from combustible cigarettes, an increase of waste product is expected.

"It's important, I think, to get ahead of it, so the culture doesn't emerge as it has with traditional combustible cigarettes," says Skazy.

He urges companies to aid in this growing issue by attempting to reduce the amount of materials used in products or packages, along with replacing disposable packaging with something reusable and durable.

It's estimated that 15,000 tonnes of cigarette waste is generated in Canada each year, and improper disposal can kill fish, freshwater invertebrates, harm birds and plants, as well as remaining toxic for long after they are discarded.

"Thirty-seven per cent of roadway litter is combustible cigarettes," says Skazy, adding cigarette filters are the most common form of litter.

In terms of e-cigarettes, they have similar make ups to traditional cigarettes, but certain components make them "hazardous waste".

These products contain nicotine, electronic circuitry and lithium-ion batteries, meaning they can leach hazardous material into the environment.

Essentially, TerraCycle's initiative is set to begin to deal with the growing waste issue, before it gets to the extent of combustible cigarette waste.

"With all kinds of waste and pollutants, we need to find a way to deal with the waste," says Laura Campbell, Green Party candidate for Dufferin-Caledon. "I know that the waste can be highly toxic and it can be problematic for groundwater just as regular cigarette butts."

Being in the headwater's region, maintaining clean groundwater is essential, according to Campbell.

?I would encourage obviously, consumers to educate themselves, but it would also be a really good initiative for the town to educate everybody on chemical wastes from all kinds of household products including e cigarettes,? Campbell says. ?It's problematic because it's something new that's now adding to an already existing problem.?

To start recycling e-cigarette waste and cigarette butts, visit: www.terracycle.com/en-CA/brigades/smoke-free-en-ca