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## **Striking art installation highlights call to ban cigarette filters in Global Plastics Treaty**

*Surfrider Foundation Canada and the Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance unveil a striking participatory art installation the “Smoked Tuna” at INC-4 at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, to profile the burning issue of cigarette butt pollution and the urgent need for global action.*

(ANISHINABE ALGONQUIN TERRITORY, OTTAWA, ON, April 24, 2024) Surfrider Foundation Canada (SFC) and The Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance (STPA) are pleased to announce a participatory art installation at the Plastic Action Zone as part of [INC-4](#), at the National Arts Centre. This visually striking installation enables attendees to safely interact with cigarette butt (CB) pollution and bring attention to the urgent need to ban plastic cigarette filters as part of a Global Plastics Treaty. SFC revealed their participatory art installation on Wednesday, April 24th at 11:30 AM at the Plastic Action Zone in the National Arts Centre (1 Elgin St, Ottawa, ON K1P 5W1)

“Cigarette filters are made of thousands of acetate plastic fibers and they are one of the most littered consumer items on the planet. These harmful plastic disposables are polluting our ecosystems, beaches, parks, trails, waterways and oceans. We urge delegates from all countries to include cigarette filters and vaping disposables in the UN plastics treaty and in national bans on single-use plastics” said Lucas Harris, Executive Director, SFC.

“Cigarette filters are deceptive and defective because they do not reduce the harm of smoking and they contain toxins and carcinogens that leach into the environment. If world leaders are serious about addressing plastic pollution, what is more obvious than cigarette filters? The plastics treaty is a golden opportunity to reduce harmful plastic waste and to address the world’s number one cause of preventable illness and death. A ban on cigarette filters and vaping disposables will protect the environment and public health” said Chris Bostic, Policy Director of Action on Smoking and Health (U.S.).

The art installation is calling for attention to the need for the Global Plastics Treaty to ban cigarette filters, one of the world’s most common forms of plastic pollution. Worldwide, 4.5 trillion CBs are littered annually, and an estimated 15,000 tonnes of cigarette waste is produced each year in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Litter audits and clean-up events, including from SFC, consistently report that CBs are the most frequently collected litter items (by number). In the 2019 Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, cigarette butts made up 42% of the litter items found.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tobaccoatlas.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ocean.org/pollution-plastics/shoreline-cleanup/impact-visualized-data>



“It’s clear that existing policies aimed at reducing cigarette pollution are not effective. More needs to be done to address this leading form of plastic pollution. The UN plastics treaty provides a perfect opportunity to ban cigarette filters and vaping disposables”, says Lucas Harris, Executive Director with SFC.

Cigarette filters are made from cellulose acetate, which does not biodegrade quickly in the environment and contains many toxic chemicals including cadmium, benzene, arsenic, and formaldehyde. Cigarette filters are also unnecessary: they do not reduce the risk of smoking, and they deceive and mislead consumers. As part of the current round of negotiations for a Global Plastics Treaty, SFC, STPA and over 100 public health and environmental nonprofits are calling for a ban on all cigarette filters and plastic vaping disposables.

The proposed ban is supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) COP 10, which called for eliminating cigarette filters and plastic vaping disposables in February 2024. The zero draft plastics treaty references the need to synergize with relevant UN treaties. The WHO FCTC must be included in the list of relevant UN treaties as it is the only other treaty which addresses a consumer product that is responsible for plastic pollution. Commercial/financial corporate conflicts of interest have been identified as a key challenge in the plastic treaty negotiations. The WHO FCTC reflects best practices to reduce corporate conflicts of interest and it provides a model for the UN plastics treaty. The tobacco industry must be excluded from the negotiations on the plastics treaty, respecting the WHO FCTC and its 183 participating countries.

### **SURFRIDER FOUNDATION CANADA**

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### **THE STOP TOBACCO POLLUTION ALLIANCE**

The [Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance](#) (STPA) is a global coalition of 100 public health organizations who recognize the crucial intersection of tobacco control and environmental health. The coalition is actively participating in the United Nations plastics treaty negotiations, including the INC-4 summit in Ottawa.

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