

Ecojustice and Friends of the Earth ask Competition Bureau Canada to investigate and levy \$230 million in fines against wipes manufacturers



Photo: Garbage caught on a storm sewer outlet

Environmental groups say “flushable” wipe based on false and misleading claims

(OTTAWA, May 1, 2019) – Today, Friends of the Earth Canada, represented by Ecojustice, filed an application seeking an investigation by the Competition Bureau into false and misleading claims made by the manufacturers of 23 so-called flushable wipes and other single-use products.

The single-use wipes, which include baby wipes and personal wipes, sold under the Cottonelle, Charmin and President’s Choice brands and others, are marketed as “flushable” and safe to be flushed down toilets. But [a recent study](#) by Ryerson University’s Urban Water program on behalf of the Municipal Enforcement Sewer Use Group demonstrated that all the products cited in the application failed to meet internationally recognized criteria for flushability. The study examined more than 101 products, and all items except toilet paper failed to pass tests for drain line clearance

and disintegration. Many of the products are also composed of plastic or regenerated cellulose.

Friends of the Earth and Ecojustice contend that marketing these products as “flushable” is false and misleading and there are environmental and cost consequences associated with consumers believing and acting on those claims.

About “flushable” wipes

- Single-use “flushable” wipes are a source of serious expense for managers of municipal water works and taxpayers, because they clog pumps, screens, filters and pumps.
- “Flushable” wipes add at least \$250 million dollars in additional repairs and maintenance each year to municipal sewer systems in Canada.
- “Flushable” wipes lead to putrid sewage clogs and can form the core of fatbergs, large masses of solid waste consisting of congealed fat and personal care products that block pipes and cause flooding.
- Single-use “flushable” wipes can end up in sewage waste converted to biosolids thereby contributing plastic and synthetic fibers to agricultural lands

Bronwyn Roe, lawyer for Ecojustice, said:

“‘Flushable’ wipes are not flushable. Calling them ‘flushable’ misleads consumers. If you flush these wipes in your home or in your workplace, you could cause serious damage to sewage systems and waterways. The blame lies not with consumers but with the manufacturers who falsely label these wipes as flushable. Proper labelling would help ensure proper disposal, keeping these wipes out of our waterways and away from our wildlife.”

Beatrice Olivastri, CEO of Friends of the Earth Canada, said:

“We’re asking the Competition Bureau to investigate and levy fines for false and misleading advertising in the amount of \$230 million. While they’re convenient, using these single-use products made of plastics and/or synthetic materials has grave environmental consequences in addition to real costs to municipal taxpayers. Concerned and informed Canadians can make a difference by refusing to buy and flush these products.”

Canadians can make their voice heard by signing petitions started by [Friends of the Earth](#) and [Ecojustice](#).



Friends of the Earth
Les Ami(e)s de la Terre

Protecting the Earth for tomorrow / Pour protéger l'avenir de la Terre

ecojustice

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Friends of the Earth Canada (www.foecanada.org) is the Canadian member of Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest grassroots environmental network campaigning in 75 countries on today's most urgent environmental and social issues.

Ecojustice, Canada's largest environmental law charity, goes to court and uses the power of the law to defend nature, combat climate change, and fight for a healthy environment for all.



Photo: Wipes and other non-flushable material caught before entering a creek