

7 METRIC TONS OF MICROSCOPIC AIR POLLUTION – **GONE!**

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The main goal of the Great Port Alberni Woodstove Exchange is to clean up our air in the winter by drastically reducing the amount of smoke we are pumping into it. A single household with an old woodstove can play a big part by choosing to exchange it for a new, relatively smokeless model.

Switching to a newer stove has a double benefit. It will produce 70 to 90% less smoke while burning at least 1/3 less wood. Every exchange removes about 70 kg. of fine smoke pollution per season from our air. Meeting our goal of 100 exchanges this winter means about 7 metric tons less fine particulate pollution going into our air.

Clean, clear air is not only aesthetically pleasing. It has a huge impact on our health and the pocket book of our health care system. A 2008 Canadian Medical Association report estimated 306 premature deaths, 1,158 hospital admissions, 8,763 emergency department visits, and 2,526,900 minor illnesses related to air pollution in BC. Recent reports confirm that the price tag for hospital visits in BC due to poor air quality is at least \$85 million per year.

If the numbers don't move you, imagine the suffering of an asthmatic child who's landed in our hospital after a few super smoky winter days. Beside damage to health, the social costs of such episodes ripple out from family stress to missed school and work days. When smoky episodes string together forming a pattern, the end result is a reduced quality of life for all of us.

Such patterns typically present themselves here in the winter when average daily pollution levels can be over the Provincial Objective up to 40% of the time. That is the inspiration for learning how to "Burn it Smart". We know too much about the effects of smoky environments, and too much about new, better appliance technologies to continue with old habits and old stoves that produce excessive smoke.

Wood is a plentiful and wonderful renewable resource for home heating in our region. It is a privilege to be able to use it that comes with certain responsibilities. Anyone who appreciates heating with wood should make sure they know what the best burning practices are and take steps to make sure their chimney and stove system is not smoking up the neighborhood.

With the current \$400 cash reward, what time could be better to help clear the air by changing out an old, ugly 'belcher' for a beautiful, clean-burning stove?