

Reducing the volume of plastic shopping bags makes ‘cents’

To reduce the volume of plastic shopping bags and encourage the use of reusable bags/bins, as of June 1, 2009, the City of Toronto requires stores to charge a minimum of 5-cents per plastic shopping bag requested by the customer at checkout. This charge will appear on the receipt (if one is issued). Certain grocery stores, such as Loblaws, No Frills and Price Chopper already charge for requested plastic carry-out bags and have realized a major reduction of these bags distributed within their stores. Reducing is always preferable to reusing or recycling.

Stores supplying such plastic shopping bags must post prominent signage announcing this City policy and allow customers to use the reusable container of their choice. The fee charged is not provided to the City, but remains with the retailer, who may in turn apply the money towards an environmentally-friendly investment involving reusable alternatives to plastic shopping bags.

This new policy does not apply to paper shopping bags or to plastic bags used by shoppers in a store to package bulk items like fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains, candy or hardware items like nails; or bags used to contain frozen food items or flowers and potted plants; bags protecting baked goods; newspaper bags; or bags provided by pharmacists to carry prescription drugs.

Currently, plastic shopping bags are recyclable in Toronto, so please recycle these bags when no longer usable. To recycle plastic shopping bags, remove receipts, stuff all bags into one tied plastic bag and put them in the Blue Bin/recycling collection container. Effective June 1, 2010, all plastic shopping bags offered by retailers must be recyclable in the City’s recycling program.

For more information see www.toronto.ca/5centbag