

November 29, 2021

Dear Councillors:

We are very pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to the city's plan to address the climate crisis (IE26.16 TransformTO-Critical Steps for Net Zero by 2040). Indeed, together we can transform Toronto into a **green, breathing, LIVABLE** city.

On any given day StopPlastics volunteers can collect a shocking amount of plastic from our local beaches. Here are but a couple of examples (attached) of plastic waste which was collected in only a couple of hours by a handful of volunteers. The flow of plastic is never ending!



It's worth noting that TransformTO's stated objectives are to "Introduce mandatory measures to reduce and prevent the generation of single-use and takeaway items in Toronto." As you know, in April 2018 there was a call to city staff to prepare a report around a "Single Use and Take-away Items Reduction Strategy". As a result of the consultations associated with this report, we learned that there is strong public support for the implementation of mandatory measures (e.g. bylaws) restricting single

use plastic. Since then, we've seen the plastic crisis worsen. **We feel strongly that NOW is the time to ban and limit single use plastic.**

We'd like to make three points here, although the list of reasons to eliminate plastic is much longer.

1. **Emissions from the plastics sector are enormous.**

In response to demands to end fossil fuels, the petrochemical industry has decided to ramp up the production of plastic despite the fact that the sector has known for decades of the risks to health and its contribution to the climate emergency. Last year, US emissions from the plastics sector were equivalent to that of 116 coal fired plants¹. A recent WHO report says that ¼ of all deaths worldwide are linked to environmental issues such as air pollution and other chemical exposures². In BIPOC communities, where many plastics are processed and manufactured, the health effects are even greater so this is as much a justice issue as it is environmental³.

2. **Recycling won't address the plastic pollution disaster. We need to eliminate the production of plastic at its source by banning it.**

By the time waste gets recycled "95% of the environmental damage has already occurred in manufacturing, in oil extraction, the poisoning of our rivers and air". In addition:

- plastic recycling never made economic sense because the plastics deteriorate with every cycle
- it's expensive to pick up and separate
- different types of plastics cannot be melted down together, they have different characteristics and uses
- few plastics have value when recycled: exceptions are PET in pop & water bottles and polyethylene in milk jugs
- recycling chasing arrows symbol is put onto everything even on those item that it was not viable to recycle
- cheaper for the plastics industry to get high quality virgin plastic at a lower cost
- the only way to deal with plastic is to stop making it, to reuse, and refill

3. **Plastic will never be able to be a part of a circular economy.**

"A circular economy is an economic system of closed loops in which raw materials, components and products lose their value as little as possible, renewable energy sources are used and systems thinking is at the core".⁴ Clearly, plastic does not belong in this category. In fact plastic recycling is the antithesis of a circular economy; not only is plastic manufactured from non-renewal materials (fossil fuels) but it loses its value with each reprocessing and can only be effectively recycled once or twice.

The list of reasons to prohibit plastics is long but there are two principal objectives in maintaining the status quo: convenience for the consumer and profit for the industry. Are we really willing to sacrifice planetary well-being for a few minutes of indulgence?

Donna-Marie for StopPlastics

¹Gribkoff, Elizabeth “Climate pollution from plastics to outpace coal emissions in US by 2030, report finds”, TheDailyClimate, Newsletter, October 22, 2021, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://www.dailyclimate.org/plastic-pollution-causing-climate-change-2655336571.html>

²Lombardi, Paula “A right to a healthy environment”, Siskinds, Blog, October 13, 2021, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://www.mondaq.com/canada/clean-air-pollution/1121644/a-right-to-a-healthy-environment>

³<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/plastic-pollution-environmental-injustice-vulnerable-communities-new>

⁴<https://kenniskaarten.hetgroenebrein.nl/en/knowledge-map-circular-economy/what-is-the-definition-a-circular-economy/>