



Councillor Michelle Berardinetti



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To: Executive Committee

From: Councillor Berardinetti

Date: January 17, 2012

Re: **Redirecting Bag Fees Back into City Programs**

On December 2008, City Council enacted a bylaw requiring all retailers located in the City of Toronto to charge customers a 5 cent per bag fee in an effort to decrease the amount of discarded plastic bags in our landfills. The bylaw went into effect on June 2009 with the hopeful intent that retailers reinvest the proceedings to environmental and community related initiatives.

Despite initial opposition, the bag fee was readily accepted by the public as previous voluntary bag fees already existed among some major retailers. Charging for bags is not relegated to Toronto but seen nationally and around the world. Consumers acknowledge the plastic bags are harmful to our ecology and should be used less in favour of reusable bags.

Given the City's systemic budget challenges and the public outcry to protect popular municipal programs, the City determine if collected bag fees could be voluntary incorporated under the aegis of the City's Toronto's Office of Partnerships. Many businesses that I have spoken to support the idea that the bag tax be specifically allocated into a meaningful municipal program, such as Forestry operations.

They support restoring the urban tree canopy that has been recently decimated by the Emerald Ash Borer (there are 860,000 ash trees impacted in Toronto) and other invasive species harmful to our local tree inventory. Businesses support the idea that their respective bag tax proceeds be directed to a tree canopy program recognized by the City in the form of a visible window display.

Recommendations:

1. That the City Manager report to the April 16, 2012 Executive Committee with a report on incentives for businesses to donate their collection of the 5 cent plastic bag fee to the City of Toronto Emerald Ash Borer Strategy.
2. That any incentive include a tax receipt to match the voluntary contribution and visible public recognition by the City of Toronto.