

## **Single-Use and Takeaway Items Consultations and Reduction Strategy Next Steps**

**Date:** May 6, 2019

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides an overview of the results from the first phase of consultation on the development of a single-use and takeaway items reduction strategy (Reduction Strategy) that took place in fall 2018. The objective of the work is to develop a Reduction Strategy which prioritizes decreasing single-use and takeaway items generated and identifying any associated reuse opportunities in the City. This approach aligns with the guiding principles of the Long Term Waste Management Strategy to reduce the amount of waste we generate and reuse what we can; rather than simply looking to material substitution and working towards having more items diverted through the City's diversion programs (i.e. Blue Bin recycling or Green Bin organics).

The report also outlines the plan for second phase of consultation activities which are currently being developed and will be undertaken in Q3/Q4 2019. This phase will provide an opportunity to receive feedback on proposed Reduction strategy policies, programs, timelines (work plan).

Staff made the commitment during Phase 1 consultation to return to Committee with an update on the next steps in the process. A final Reduction Strategy and Phase 2 consultation results will be brought forward for Committee and City Council consideration in Q1/Q2 in 2020.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager of Solid Waste Management Services recommends that:

1. The Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on July 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 30, 2018, Toronto City Council adopted Item PW31.10 entitled "Options to Address Single-Use Items, Misleading Advertising, and Textile Waste in the City of Toronto" which directs the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services to do the following:

- Develop a policy which would restrict plastic straws in the City of Toronto by the end of the first quarter of 2019;
- Consult with affected businesses, community health groups and other organizations prior to the submission of the proposed policy which would restrict plastic straws and report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee at its first meeting in 2019; and,
- Accelerate the proposed work plan aimed to reduce the use of single-use or takeaway packaging or products by completing pre-consultation with residents and stakeholders by fall 2018 to identify items for targeted reduction and solicit input on policy tools with a report back in January of 2019.

The City Council Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PW31.10>

At its meeting on April 24, 25, 26, and 27, 2018, City Council adopted Item PW28.8 entitled "State of Toronto's Blue Bin Recycling Program".

The City Council Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PW28.8>

At its meeting on April 11, 2018, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee adopted Item PW28.9 entitled "Review of Single-Serve Coffee Pods in the City of Toronto's Waste Diversion Programs".

The Public Works and Infrastructure Committee Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PW28.9>

At its meeting on January 19, 2018, the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee considered Item PW26.7 entitled "Reducing the use of Single-Use Products" and referred the item to the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, for consideration as part of the Long Term Waste Management Strategy.

The Public Works and Infrastructure Committee Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PW26.7>

At its meeting on July 12, 13, 14, and 15, 2016, City Council adopted Item PW14.2 entitled "Final Long Term Waste Management Strategy", and adopted the recommended options and implementation plan, as presented in Attachment 1 to the report (June 2, 2016) from the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services.

The City Council Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PW14.2>

At its meeting on June 19, 2013, the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee adopted without amendment Item PW24.2 entitled "Options to Reduce the Use and Disposal of Plastic Shopping Carryout Bags in Toronto".

The Public Works and Infrastructure Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PW24.2>

At its meeting on November 30, December 1, 2, 4, and 7, 2009, City Council adopted item PW28.18, entitled "Potential Changes to the *Waste Diversion Act, 2002*, and the Blue Box Program Plan and Impacts on Hot Drink Cup and Plastic Take-out Food Containers", including direction to defer any further work with respect to policies and By-law development related to plastic take-out food containers and hot drink cups until after Provincial policies have been established.

The City Council Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.PW28.18>

## COMMENTS

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In 2018, the former Public Works and Infrastructure Committee and City Council adopted a number of Staff Reports which outlined challenges facing the City's waste diversion programs. The challenges, which are still being faced, include impacts from the on-going proliferation of new packaging materials and compositions, contamination of diversion streams and severe restrictions for international recycling commodity markets. Reducing single-use and takeaway items will decrease the overall amount of waste requiring management and disposal, and may help to address some of the challenges facing diversion programs.

Development of a comprehensive Reduction Strategy that focuses on reducing single-use and takeaway items waste aligns with recommendations of the City's Long Term Waste Management Strategy. Direction received from City Council in July 2018 accelerated planned efforts under the Long Term Waste Management Strategy (the Waste Strategy) to address single-use and takeaway items (i.e. any work on bans, new By-laws and enforcement was originally scheduled for implementation in the Waste Strategy for years 2019 to 2021).

## Phase 1 Consultation: Reduction Opportunities for Single-use and Takeaway Items

Phase 1 consultations took place in fall 2018 and are summarized in Attachment 1. A two-phase consultation process was undertaken to allow for fulsome engagement opportunities with the public and stakeholders and to allow for meaningful consideration of any resulting policies to address single-use and takeaway items.

The public and stakeholders were asked to identify opportunities to reduce the generation of single-use and takeaway items in Toronto. Throughout Phase 1 consultation, there was emphasis that the City's future Reduction Strategy policy and program development approach prioritizes reduction or reuse, over ensuring that the items are recyclable or compostable. Preventing waste from requiring management through source reduction supports more efficient, sustainable and cost-effective use of resources than any available form of waste processing or disposal.

Attachment 2 outlines the list of questions posed in the City's online survey. Attachment 3 to this report is the presentation used during Phase 1 consultation public and stakeholder meetings.

For consultation purposes, a single-use or takeaway item was presented as:

*"any product designed for a single-use after which it is disposed of, whether into garbage or a waste diversion stream, as solid waste. Typically, these products are not designed for durability or reuse."*

The objectives of Phase 1 consultation were to obtain input and feedback on:

- Which single-use or takeaway items should be addressed by future policies and programs;
- The preferred methods or approaches (through mandatory or voluntary approaches, or a combination thereof) to reduce these items; and
- Additional opportunities to promote reuse.

Stakeholders consulted in Phase 1 included:

- the general public
- food and restaurant establishments
- retail and manufacturing groups
- academics
- non-governmental organizations
- accessibility organizations

Stakeholder engagement activities undertaken during Phase 1 consultation included:

- Online survey (Fall 2018, 20,000+ respondents)

- Written comment period in Fall 2018, during Phase 1 consultation
- Public event, webcast and webinar (~240 participants)
- Four stakeholder meetings (~30 participants)
- Seven online or email communications to stakeholders
- Over 1.85 Million social media impressions

A polling survey of 1,000 Toronto residents was also completed by a third party research firm to gather statistically significant data on Toronto residents' preferred approaches to reducing single-use and takeaway items.

## **Outcomes of Phase 1 Consultation**

In the Phase 1 consultation, 20,512 individuals participated with 95 per cent of individuals residing in Toronto or the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton Area. The participation in consultation demonstrates that a significant number of residents and ratepayers are supportive of the City taking some form of action to address single-use and takeaway items at a local scale.

Items targeted and presented in the consultation included plastic bags, cutlery, straws, to-go drink cups, expanded polystyrene foam takeout containers and black plastic takeout containers. The majority of participants indicated strong levels of support (87% - 93%) for reduction of all items listed, with the exception of paper bags.

Participants that completed the survey and/or poll expressed consistent support for mandatory measures and voluntary approaches to reduce many single-use and takeaway items. Respondents expressed consistent strong support (75%, 1% variation) for mandatory approaches to reduce: plastic bags, expanded polystyrene foam and black plastic takeout containers.

All other items listed received support for mandatory (52% - 63%) or a combination of voluntary and mandatory (24% - 35%) approaches to reduction (with the exception of paper bags). Employing combinations of voluntary or mandatory approaches to reduce single-use and takeaway items also received support.

Examples of mandatory approaches could include item bans, distribution By-laws, and mandatory fees or licensing requirements. Examples of voluntary approaches could include education campaigns, pledges or waste reduction plans, the promotion of reusable alternatives to single-use and takeaway items and advocacy for packaging regulations that result in waste reduction and resource recovery.

Participants were asked to provide feedback on which single-use and takeaway items they use most frequently, their reasons for using these materials, and the likelihood they could switch to a reusable alternative. (All participants were also able to submit additional comments regarding the use, restriction and reduction of single-use and takeaway items.) Table 1 below outlines a comparison of responses received from the City of Toronto's online survey and the polling completed by the third party research firm.

Table 1.0 - Comparison of City of Toronto and Polling results on options to reduce the use of single-use and takeaway items in Toronto

Survey or Polling Question	Feedback Received	
	City of Toronto Online Survey	Third Party Polling
How frequently do you use the following single-use and takeaway items?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic bags and disposable hot-to-go cups were the most frequently used materials, with 17% and 11% of respondents using them every day or almost every day.</li> <li>The least used item was an expanded polystyrene or black plastic container, with only 2% of respondents indicating they use these materials every day or almost every day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic bags, any colour plastic containers and disposable hot-to-go cups were the most frequently used materials, with 25%, 18% and 18% of respondents using these every day or almost every day, respectively.</li> <li>The least used item was an expanded polystyrene container, with only 4% of respondents indicating they used this material every day or almost every day.</li> </ul>
How likely would you be to use an alternative reusable item instead of the single-use or takeaway option?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many respondents indicated they would be very willing to use an alternative reusable item instead of a plastic bag (65%) disposable plastic container (63%), disposable hot-to-go cup (61%).</li> <li>55% of respondents indicated they were very likely to use a reusable straw, which was the lowest level of interest in reusable alternative in the survey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>34% of respondents indicated they were very likely to use an alternative to a disposable hot-to-go cup, the highest level of interest received.</li> <li>The lowest interest was in using reusable food containers, with only 27% of respondents indicating they were very likely to do so.</li> </ul>

Survey or Polling Question	Feedback Received	
	City of Toronto Online Survey	Third Party Polling
Indicate whether you would support or oppose the reduction of the following items in the City of Toronto?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded polystyrene containers received the most support for reduction, with 84% of respondents indicating they strongly support reduction.</li> <li>Plastic bags, black plastic containers, disposable hot-to-go and cold-to-go cups, plastic straws, and disposable cutlery received substantial support, with 77% or more of respondents indicating their strong support for reduction.</li> <li>Paper bags were the only material to not receive majority strong support for reduction, with only 52% strongly supporting reduction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic straws and expanded polystyrene containers received the highest levels of support for reduction, with 46% and 39% of respondents indicating they strongly support reduction.</li> <li>Respondents indicated lowest opposition to measures to reduce expanded polystyrene containers, with only 4% strongly opposed to reduction.</li> <li>Paper bags had the lowest support for reduction, with only 22% of respondents indicating strong support.</li> </ul>

Survey or Polling Question	Feedback Received	
	City of Toronto Online Survey	Third Party Polling
<p>Considering the following single-use and takeaway items, indicate whether you believe that the City of Toronto should use mandatory, voluntary, a combination of mandatory and voluntary approaches, or none of these approaches to reduce the use of these items?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic bags, expanded polystyrene containers and black plastic containers received the highest levels of support for mandatory approaches to reduction, with 75%, 75%, and 74% support respectively. 90%+ of respondents supported mandatory or a combination of mandatory and voluntary approaches for these materials.</li> <li>All items listed received a minimum of 52% support for a mandatory approach to reduction, with the exception of paper bags, which received only 33% support.</li> <li>Paper bags received the highest level of support for voluntary action at 27%.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic Straws, black plastic containers and expanded polystyrene received the highest levels of support for mandatory approaches to reduction, with 42%, 34% and 33% support respectively. 64%+ of respondents supported mandatory or a combination of mandatory and voluntary approaches to these materials.</li> <li>Disposable hot-to-go and cold-to-go cups received the highest levels of support for voluntary reduction programs, with 35% support for each item.</li> <li>Black plastic containers and expanded polystyrene containers received the highest levels of support for some type of approach to reduction, with 90% of respondents supporting the City taking a combination, voluntary or mandatory approach to reduction.</li> </ul>



Consistent themes regarding what should be considered as the City develops a Reduction Strategy, proposed policies and programs emerged through consultation. Themes included, in no prioritized order:

- Accessibility and equity must be considered to ensure programs and policies do not impose additional burdens/impacts to vulnerable people.
- There is strong support for a variety of reduction approaches including mandatory, voluntary, and a combination of both voluntary and mandatory approaches.
- Metrics should be used to target items for reduction that include environmental impact, economic impact, accessibility and equity.
- A phased approach is required to adapt to encourage and allow people and businesses implement new programs and policies.
- Producers, manufacturers and businesses have a role in reducing waste through their purchasing, packaging, and full extended producer responsibility.
- The City can demonstrate leadership in its own operations, policies and procurements.
- Consistent messaging and education is necessary for the public, producers, and vendors for implementation success.
- Harmonized policies and programs with other jurisdictions (municipal, provincial, federal and international) are most desired by all affected stakeholders.
- Stakeholders identified an opportunity and desire for the City to demonstrate leadership in waste reduction in its own operations.

Participants identified additional single-use or takeaway items which the City could consider as part of the Reduction Strategy including, but not limited to, cigarette butts and plastic water bottles.

Areas requiring further research and consideration identified in consultation include metrics development, evaluation criteria definitions, and policies on emerging alternatives to existing packaging (such as plastics or other materials marketed as compostable).

## **Feedback Received Regarding Plastic Straws**

Feedback from consultation indicates that there is strong support for the reduction of single-use plastic straws in Toronto. However, plastic straws were also identified as a vital accessibility device for some individuals living with a disability. Policies or programs developed to reduce use of single-use plastic straws will need careful consideration to ensure there is no increased burden for those affected. Further feedback will be solicited on a range of options to address single-use plastic straws

during Phase 2 consultation. Additional examination of policies to address this material by the Toronto Accessibility Committee may be necessary following Phase 2 consultation.

## **Addressing Single-use and Takeaway Items in Other Jurisdictions**

Participants in Phase 1 consultation expressed a preference that policies and programs address single-use and takeaway items be harmonized or consistent with regulations in other jurisdictions. As part of the Reduction Strategy development staff are completing jurisdictional reviews to determine best practice for emerging policies to address single-use and takeaway items and the employed stakeholder engagement processes.

Many Canadian municipalities have either adopted regulations or are developing regulations to address these types of materials. Both Montreal, Quebec and Victoria, British Columbia have variations of bans on plastic bags. Vancouver, British Columbia is developing a comprehensive Single-use Reduction Strategy, and Halifax, Nova Scotia and New York City, New York, are currently considering restrictions on some plastic materials, such as plastic bags. Results of the comprehensive jurisdictional scan will be included in a future report together with Phase 2 consultation outcomes.

## **City of Toronto Leadership on Reducing Single-use and Takeaway Items and Waste Reduction**

The City implemented a prohibition on the sale or distribution of bottled water at all City of Toronto facilities and operations in 2012. Recent efforts to identify a food service provider at City Hall also considered waste reduction and diversion requirements.

In 2018, the City of Toronto became the first Canadian municipality to join the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, an international non-governmental organization dedicated to progressing the circular economy including a strong focus on recovery and reduction of plastic waste. Also in 2018, the City of Toronto drafted a motion for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities calling on the Federal Government to develop a comprehensive plastics waste strategy.

Currently, Solid Waste Management Services' Unit for Research, Innovation and a Circular Economy is working with the Purchasing and Materials Management Division and other City Divisions to reduce the use of single-use packaging items resulting from City procurements. This work will include identifying where single-use packaging items are currently being generated (or may be introduced) then seek opportunities to introduce alternative requirements to reduce single-use packaging item generation where suitable alternatives exist. This work supports the City's zero waste aspirations as set out in the Council-approved Long Term Waste Management Strategy. It also supports ongoing work underway in the implementation of the City's Framework for Integrating Circular Economy Approaches into City Procurement Processes to Support Waste Reduction and Diversion.

## **Planning for Phase 2 Consultations**

Phase 2 consultation in Q3/Q4 2019 will present examples of potential policies and programs to develop a Reduction Strategy for Toronto. Participants will be invited to comment on the proposed timeline for implementation and the proposed regulatory and voluntary approaches and programs.

The proposed programs and policies are currently being drafted and are being developed drawing upon staff expertise, consideration of potential impacts to the integrated solid waste management utility program, thorough review of feedback from public and stakeholder engagement, primary research, and completion of a jurisdictional review. Solid Waste Management Services has also retained an external consultant to help inform, develop a set of considerations and evaluation criteria for selecting Reduction Strategy approaches, and refine any associated policies and programs.

Engagement activities will mirror the tactics employed in Phase 1, with consideration given to accessibility barriers to ensure input from a broad range of affected stakeholders. Focus will continue to be on the single-use and takeaway items originally identified (with consideration of any other materials which may arise).

## **Importance of Mandatory and Voluntary Policy and Program Development Considerations**

Evaluation of specific policies and programs to address single-use and takeaway items will consider environmental, financial and social impacts. Feedback received from Phase 1 consultation represents only one aspect of the evaluation criteria. Solid Waste Management Services has engaged an external consultant to complete a comprehensive evaluation and review of single-use item reduction policies in other jurisdictions. They are also assisting with development of a consistent approach to further refine a Reduction Strategy work plan for Phase 2 consultation.

Consistent with feedback received during Phase 1 consultation, a proposed Reduction Strategy will consider and prioritize policies and programs which, in no prioritized order:

- Address materials which are not recyclable or are not effectively recycled in Toronto's Blue Bin Recycling Program.
- Target materials which are known to contribute to street litter and marine litter.
- Reflect survey and polling data on preferred approaches and items to target.
- Achieve a measurable environmental impact.
- Are harmonized or consistent with policies and programs being developed nationally and locally to reduce Single-use or Takeaway Items.

## Provincial and Federal Policy Considerations

Policies and programs introduced in Toronto must also consider ongoing changes to Ontario's integrated waste management system following the introduction of the *Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2016*. The associated *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*, will result in a transition of Ontario's Blue Box Programs to a full Extended Producer Responsibility model.

Many single-use and takeaway items are currently managed in Toronto's Blue Bin recycling program, which only receives partial funding. As the program transitions to full producer responsibility, emerging program requirements may further incentivize producers to reduce production of some single-use and takeaway items. The current timeline for transitioning the Blue Box Program is unclear, and may be impacted by development of the Province's Climate Change Action Plan.

In early March 2019, the Ontario government released the Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities: Discussion Paper, which expands upon waste reduction commitments in Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. Solid Waste Management Services coordinated the City's response to this discussion paper. Comments in the paper included a request to address litter through establishing Provincial regulatory measures to support the reduction in use of single-use items and also suggested that a focus from the Ministry on repair, reuse, sharing, repairing, and remanufacturing could potentially create jobs and innovative products that allow for a higher value than a single-use product.

The Federal Government also began work to address single-use plastics in 2018, with a national consultation entitled Moving Canada towards Zero Plastic Waste.

Staff continue to monitor emerging Provincial and Federal policies to ensure policy alignment on single-use and takeaway items which best serves residents and ratepayers of Toronto.

## Next Steps

A proposed work plan for the reduction of single-use and takeaway items will be presented to participants in the Phase 2 consultation that is planned for Q3/Q4 2019. The outcome of Phase 2 consultation will be presented in a report to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee in Q1/Q2 2020. The report will also outline recommended elements of a proposed Reduction Strategy work plan for Toronto.

## CONTACT

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Matt Keliher  
General Manager  
Solid Waste Management Services

## **ATTACHMENT**

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Attachment 1 – Executive Summary - Public Consultation Report on Phase 1 Consultation Regarding Single-use and Takeaway Items

Attachment 2 - Questions from Phase 1 Consultation - Online Survey Regarding Single-use and Takeaway Items

Attachment 3 - Presentation from October 2, 2018 Public Event "Addressing Single-use and Takeaway Items in Toronto"