

April 14, 2021

To Infrastructure and Environment Committee Chair and Members:

Re: Urging the Federal Government to Take Action to Manage Plastics

Plastic pollution is recognized by the Government of Canada, as well as governments and scientists around the world, as damaging to the environment. Residents of the City of Toronto are seeing the impact, now more than ever, of the amount of waste and recycling we create every week when we put out our bins having stayed at home during the pandemic.

Currently, the country lacks a comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing the growing problem of plastic pollution as global annual production of plastic products is expected to double in the next decade, to 800 million tonnes in 2030.

The majority of plastics produced are not currently suitable for reuse or recycling and some 8,000 tonnes of Canadian plastic waste end up in landfills, incinerators or the natural environment every day;

40 per cent of plastic production is for “single-use” items that are used once and thrown away, which runs counter to the principles of a circular economy, therefore depriving the potential to create green jobs to support our planet and local environment.

Municipalities bear a significant burden of managing plastics - as collectors of plastics in the recycling and garbage streams, and as the collector of plastics that end up in the environment in our greenspaces and waterways. This requires substantial investment in waste management and clean-up costs both from the City and its residents.

We know that Torontonians are ready for action on plastics: Toronto Council committed to addressing single use plastics in 2018, and the associated public consultations saw record levels of participation with very clear support for action to address single use containers.

A comprehensive national plastics strategy will help Toronto as we push ahead to prevent plastic pollution in our environment, as we work to reduce waste sent to landfill, and as we support a just recovery with green jobs in the circular economy.

The City of Toronto should seek the support of the federal government and urge them to act quickly upon their plans to address the use of single-use plastics.

Recommendations:

1. City Council endorse the integrated management plan for plastics proposed by the federal government, which includes:
 - a. Adding plastic manufactured items as a toxic substance to Schedule 1 of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA)
 - b. Banning six single-use items: checkout bags, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery, certain takeout containers and straws
 - c. Establishing a minimum requirement for recycled plastic content in new plastic products.
2. City Council request the federal government to implement this important management plan as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than the end of the year.
3. City Council request the City Manager to ask the federal government to work with the City of Toronto and the relevant City staff to explore, with a view to investing in, reuse systems to replace single-use plastic products.
4. City Council request the federal government to establish a registry that publicly reports on:
 - a. Descriptions of the plastic manufactured items put on the market each year in Canada
 - b. A list of chemicals found in each product
 - c. The amount of plastic that enters the waste stream in Canada each year, broken down by how and where the waste is processed (e.g. landfill, incineration/waste-to-energy, recycling, domestic vs. export)
5. City Council request the federal government to establish a framework for the adoption of Extended Producer Responsibility regulation across the country to ensure producers are responsible for the full lifecycle of the products they put on the market in Canada.
6. City Council request the federal government to set a national recycling target for plastic products.

Thank you,

Councillor Mike Layton
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