



City of Toronto

Original by email: iec@toronto.ca

cc: Councilor Mike Layton: councillor_layton@toronto.ca

IE22.6 "Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy"

May 11, 2021

Dear Mayor Tory and Councillors of the City of Toronto,

We strongly encourage the City of Toronto to proceed with reducing unnecessary single-use plastic items via regulations.

Research from the Rochman Lab estimates that 24 million–34 million tonnes of plastic waste was emitted into aquatic ecosystems globally in 2020 and that if we continue business as usual, that number may surpass 90 million tonnes by 2030 ([Borrelle et al., 2020 Science](#)). Even if we implement the commitments being made around the world to reduce country-level emissions, global emissions may double. There is no time to waste. *Unless growth in plastic production and use is halted, a fundamental transformation of the plastic economy is essential. We need a shift to a circular economy, where end-of-life plastic products are valued rather than becoming waste. Reducing unnecessary single-use plastic items is a critical part to this shift.*

*I am the lead of the Rochman Lab at the University of Toronto (U of T), investigating the ecological implications of plastic debris in marine and freshwater habitats. I have published dozens of scientific papers in respected journals, led international working groups on plastic pollution, and participated in policy meetings regarding local and international plastic waste strategies. I am also a co-founder of the **U of T Trash Team**, which is a science-based community outreach group that combines science, education, and community outreach locally to increase waste literacy and reduce plastic pollution globally.*

Reducing single-use plastic items that are common environmental pollutants, are not reusable or recyclable, and that have a substitution is an important part of a transition to a circular economy. I applaud the decision to implement voluntary programs support businesses in reducing waste, and using reusables. I also very much agree with the idea of revisiting mandatory regulations, such as bans and fees on certain single-use plastics to more concretely reduce plastic waste. *The single-use plastic items that can be reduced have substitutes, are not essential, and are [often found in nature](#). I also suggest that the City think critically when determining substitutes. If compostable or biodegradable plastics are to be considered for exemption, they need to be truly compostable beyond an industrial compost facility and/or biodegradable in the natural environment in a relatively fast time span (e.g., less than six months). To the best of our knowledge, there are no products currently in the market that meet these criteria. For example, BPI compostable plastics should not be considered at this time because they are not recyclable or compostable in Toronto. They go to landfill. Products that are truly sustainable should fit into available composting and recycling waste management schemes broadly.*

Thank you for taking the time to read my position. I applaud the City of Toronto government for taking steps toward systemic change in relation to the way we make, use, and waste plastics. I hope that Toronto moves



forward with these initiatives and considers my positions along the way. If there are any questions or concerns, I would be very happy to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chelsea M. Rochman %
Assistant Professor of Aquatic Ecology %
Co-Founder of the U of T Trash Team %
University of Toronto %

