



A Greener City for All

May 25, 2022

Toronto Infrastructure and Environment Committee
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
By email: iec@toronto.ca

Re: IE 30.17 Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy - Voluntary Measures Program Launch

To Councillors and Committee members,

The Toronto Environmental Alliance is an environmental non-profit organization that has been advocating for zero waste policies and programs for over thirty years. **I am here today to urge you to continue Toronto's progress to address single-use items and move our city towards a waste-free, resilient circular economy.**

Single-use plastics and takeaway products are a serious and growing problem - from plastic pollution and the problems with recycling, to the upstream impacts of fossil fuels and plastic production on our health and environment.

Toronto City Council voted to take action on this growing waste crisis more than two years ago. Multiple extensive public and stakeholder consultations confirmed that the strong majority of Torontonians support local regulations for the worst materials. **We are disappointed that the Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy has stalled despite the broad support from Council and the public.**

A year ago I spoke to this Committee, excited about the Stage 1 of the Strategy, a Voluntary Measures Program outlined by staff which would provide support for businesses to reduce waste voluntarily. We were also very happy to see a commitment by Council to have the City lead by example, adopting all voluntary measures in City facilities and on City property.

Unfortunately, progress from City Council on the Reduction Strategy has stalled, despite the ongoing work by City staff, strong public support, and a growing interest in reducing waste and shifting to reusable alternatives by both major chains and by small businesses across Toronto.

We urge you to keep up the momentum on this file - let Toronto residents and businesses know that the City will follow through on its commitments to address single-use items. We have the following recommendations:

1. Move quickly with the Voluntary Measures Program to provide guidance and support for businesses to shift away from waste and save money.

Forthcoming federal regulations on single-use plastics, and increasing demand from the public has many restaurants and food service businesses looking at how they can make better choices.

Supporting businesses to make the shift away from single-use to low-cost reusables is something the City can start on right away. Businesses are seeking guidance and information right now, and the City can play a key role in reducing uncertainty and risk for small businesses as they make decisions on what packaging to buy, what to invest in.

2. The City should lead by example in publicly-funded facilities and at events.

The City has an important leadership role to play in helping to promote and demonstrate waste reduction activities. Last year Council unanimously committed to leading by example, saving the city money and reducing waste by implementing all of the promoted voluntary measures in City facilities and City-operated programs. Council has previously committed to reducing single-use plastics in City facilities, and it's important to follow through on those commitments.

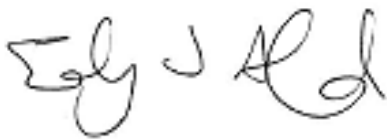
3. Don't stop with voluntary measures - mandatory measures must follow in 2023.

Finally, while leading by example and supporting businesses to voluntarily reduce waste are important steps Toronto needs to take right now, this is just the beginning. To truly reduce single-use items and shift our City towards low-cost, reusable alternatives, we need mandatory measures and regulations. We have seen that there is support from the public, and from businesses for mandatory measures, and we have seen that they work in other jurisdictions.

Toronto City staff and Council have made great progress on this file, and we need you to keep up the momentum to move towards a circular economy, and a city based on reusables - where food and drinks are served on real dishes when you dine in, when you can bring your own container, or borrow a reusable cup for take-out. We've seen growing interest in and excitement for this shift from Toronto residents and businesses.

Please support the motion from Councillors Layton and Robinson to provide a much-needed update and assure Torontonians that Council is committed to moving forward with this strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily J. Alfred'.

Emily J. Alfred
Waste Campaigner, Toronto Environmental Alliance