



City of  
**Peterborough**

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**To:** **Members of the General Committee**

**From:** **Jasbir Raina, Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services**

**Meeting Date:** **July 4, 2022**

**Subject:** **Single Use Plastics Reduction Strategy Update, Report IPSES22-015**

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council regarding the development of a phased in approach to discourage and/or eliminate the use of “hard to recycle” single use plastic items as recommended by the Peterborough (City) Single Use Plastics Reduction Working Group.

## **Recommendations**

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report IPSES22-015, dated July 4, 2022, of the Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services as follows:

- a) That staff commence with the development and phased in implementation of a “lead by example” single use plastics reduction strategy pilot at a select number of City owned locations, including:
  - i. City Hall (500 George Street North); and
  - ii. Waste Water Treatment Plant.
- b) That staff commence with the development of a City of Peterborough – Zero Waste Event Planning Guide for City (and private events - i.e., festivals);
- c) That staff develop and implement an enhanced public awareness campaign including updated promotional and educational signage to support improving

proper sorting of targeted recyclable material in public spaces including City parks, recreational facilities and City owned locations (i.e., libraries); and

- d) That a temporary 24-month contract position to assist with the design and implementation of the recommendations as set out in Appendix A attached to this report, and titled Circular Economy Coordinator, to be within the Waste Diversion Section of the Environmental Services Division and reporting to the Manager of the Waste Diversion Section, funded from the Waste Management Reserve, be approved.

## Budget and Financial Implication

The Single-Use Working Group has reviewed plastic reduction options and viable opportunities. Some of the opportunities require support and additional funding to implement. The requested position for the Waste Diversion Section in the Environmental Services Division, titled will be funded through the Waste Management Reserve. The total cost of proposed contract is estimated to be \$100,000.

## Background

Single-use plastics are a significant contributor to the global plastic pollution problem. Although considered convenient for short term use, many of these items including plastic straws, utensils, stir sticks, cups, water bottles, plates, bowls, take out containers are not easily recyclable and ultimately end up in landfill.

Council resolution adopted by City Council (February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019) as follows:

That staff report on existing waste diversion practices and the potential for an awareness-building program focused on encouraging the reduction of hard to recycle single-use plastics.

With the intent to solicit community stakeholder engagement towards a Made-In-Peterborough solution, staff formulated a “Single Use Plastics Reduction Working Group” (SUPR Working Group), undertaking the following process:

- An interview process was held (approximately 30 applicants) to recruit eight (8) volunteers from diverse sectors of the community to be part of the SUPR Working Group, chaired by Councillor Gary Baldwin;
- Six meetings were held with the SUPR Working Group between August and December 2019. Guest speakers from GreenUP; DBIA; Youth Leadership and Sustainability Course at Trent, StudioPTBO and Sustain provided insight into leading trends and initiatives focused on the reduction of single use plastics;

- This SUPR Working Group recommended that the City of Peterborough proclaim October 21 to 27, 2019 Waste Reduction Week, which was done by Mayor Therrien;
- The SUPR Working Group provided staff the flexibility to work within the framework from that Working Group to Council for preferred recommendations and an implementation schedule.

### **Recommendations from the SUPR Working Group**

The Working Group organized all their strategies into four (4) broad categories with key recommendations including:

#### **1. City Mandate Reduction Strategy**

Continue to monitor and support Provincial and Federal regulatory initiatives, and remain prepared to implement municipal bans on single use plastics, Styrofoam cups, take-out containers, black plastic (potentially other non-recyclable plastics), plastic straws, and single use plastic beverage bottles. The City of Peterborough is committed to remaining a Municipal leader in waste management and diversion initiatives. Maintain the City of Peterborough's innovative film plastic Recycling program.

#### **2. Business Reduction Strategy / Business Sustainability Support System**

Execute a survey of businesses to determine barriers to reducing single use plastics, and support cutting edge initiatives including a local eco-rating system for stores and restaurants, create a step-by-step program for businesses to follow, review cost/benefit of incentives for businesses to encourage diversion. Provide related workshops for local businesses and citizens, and support businesses within the City of Peterborough in providing greener options.

#### **3. Zero Waste Public Events**

Prepare a guide and resources for planning zero or low waste events, and ban single-use plastics from events on city property. Plan an event downtown to highlight initiatives, and create awareness of current opportunities.

#### **4. Public Education and Awareness Enhancement – public spaces**

Extend the lifetime of the single use plastics working group (or some version of this)  
Retain a Sustainability Coordinator to support efforts.

A summary review from the Single Use Plastics Reduction Committee is included in this report as Appendix A.

## **Peterborough Waste Management Master Plan – Update**

In September 2021, the City hired Exp. Services, a third-party professional Ontario based consulting firm, to undertake the review and update of the existing Peterborough Waste Management Master Plan (WMMP), which was last updated in 2012.

This initiative will be undertaken through 2022, including a review of industry proven diversion opportunities, public consultation, and culminating in an updated WMMP to optimize diversion opportunities. All recommendations made by the Single-Use Plastics Reduction Working Group will be included in the assessment for consideration for inclusion in the updated plan recommendations.

## **Summary**

This report provided an update regarding the development of a phased in approach to discourage and/or eliminate the use of “hard to recycle” single use plastic items as recommended by the Peterborough (City) Single Use Plastics Reduction Working Group.

Submitted by,

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Commissioner, Infrastructure and Planning Services

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### **Attachments**

Appendix A: Detailed Single Use Plastics Reduction Committee Report

## Appendix A – SUPR Working Group recommendations

Single-use plastics are a significant contributor to the global plastic pollution problem. Although considered convenient for short term use, many of these items including plastic straws, utensils, stir sticks, cups, water bottles, plates, bowls, take out containers are not easily recyclable and ultimately end up in landfill.

Council resolution adopted by City Council (February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019) as follows:

That staff report on existing waste diversion practices and the potential for an awareness-building program focused on encouraging the reduction of hard to recycle single-use plastics.

With the intent to solicit community stakeholder engagement towards a Made-In-Peterborough solution, staff formulated a “Single Use Plastics Reduction Working Group” also referred to as the Dream Team, undertaking the following process:

- An interview process was held (with over thirty applicants) to recruit eight (8) volunteers from diverse sectors of the community to be part of this working group, Co-Chaired by Councillor Gary Baldwin;
- Six (6) meetings were held with the Dream team between August and December 2019. Guest speakers from: GreenUP; D.B.I.A.; Youth Leadership and Sustainability Course at Trent, StudioPTBO and Sustain provided insight into leading trends and initiatives focused on the reduction of single use plastics;
- This working group recommended that the City of Peterborough proclaim October 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Waste Reduction Week, which was done by Mayor Therrien;
- The Single Use Plastics Working Group provide the Waste Diversion Section the flexibility to work within the framework from the Working Group to Council for preferred recommendations and an implementation schedule.
- The members were in general agreement that this was a great experience and would like to see this group continue in future years. The group also wants to see something happen from the work that they have done.

### Recommendations from the Working Group

The Working Group organized all their strategies into four (4) broad categories with key recommendations including:

#### 1. City Mandate Reduction Strategy

- Ban single use plastics from municipal buildings

- Ban Styrofoam cups and take-out containers
- Ban black plastic (potentially other non-recyclable plastics)
- Ban on plastic straws
- Ban on plastic shopping bags
- Expanded ban on the sale of single use plastic water and beverage bottles

## **2. Business Reduction Strategy / Business Sustainability Support System**

- Survey of businesses to determine barriers to reducing single use plastics
- A local eco-rating system for stores and restaurants
- Create a step-by-step program for businesses to follow
- Tax-break / rebate or other incentives for businesses
- Provide related workshops for local businesses and citizens
- Require businesses within the City of Peterborough to provide greener options

## **3. Zero Waste Public Events**

- Ban single-use plastics from events on city property
- Guide and sources for planning zero / low waste events
- Plan and event downtown to highlight initiatives

## **4. Public Education and Awareness Enhancement – public spaces**

- Extend the lifetime of the single use plastics working group (or some version of this)
- Hire a Sustainability Coordinator

## **COVID-19 Virus Implications**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic issues and food handling safety measures and the uncertainty of what the future holds and our commitment to keep the citizens of Peterborough safe, our suggestions are that considerations towards the following initiatives be deferred until a later date (to be determined) subject to the abatement of pandemic concerns.

### **1. Mug Share program**

In partnership with the DBIA and Peterborough GreenUP, patrons could purchase Peterborough themed reusable mugs and receive a discount on refills from participating restaurants in the DBIA.

This is an effort to be more sustainable by reducing the amount of paper cups that are being made, recycled or thrown into the garbage. Saving a single paper cup may seem like a small action but think about how many times you have thrown away a single cup in the last year.

We would like to see this program as a pilot project in the D.B.I.A. This is a mug share program and would partner with the Café's in the district.

Due to the fact that the schools are closed, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Trent Program would not be available to help with this project. Once, GreenUP and Sustain have reopened and the DBIA is back in full swing, perhaps this project can be brought to these groups for discussion.

### **2. Create a step-by-step program for businesses**

Lug-A-Mug Program - This is a program that could be Citywide or in the DBIA. Several businesses have acknowledged support of this and would be willing to help with the implementation.

GreenUP stated that they would be a resource for the development of this program. The Youth Leadership and Sustainability Course at Trent University has also offered assistance with this program; the DBIA and Sustain would also like to be involved.

### **3. Take-Out Container Reduction Strategy**

A pilot project was discussed regarding GreenUP researching take-out containers. GreenUP could provide restaurant owners eco-friendly solutions. An opportunity exists for GreenUP could partner with the DBIA as the provider of preferred take-out containers purchased as part of the pilot project to see how restaurants feel about the product(s) selected.

## **Regulatory Authority – Province of Ontario**

In December 2021, the Ontario government – Minister Stephen Guilbeault - released draft regulations to ban six kinds of “harmful” single-use plastic in Canada: straws and stir sticks, six-pack rings, grocery bags, cutlery and difficult to recycle takeout containers. The new rules may come into effect by the end of 2022 (about one year later than planned), with a transition (phase-in) period to allow restaurants and businesses to get used to the new rules.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) released (draft) regulations under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act (Blue Box) to improve the blue box and make producers responsible for operating blue

box programs and make producers 100% physically and financially responsible for the Ontario Blue Box Program for materials including paper, glass, cardboard, plastics, metal (aluminum & steel). The (draft) regulations were posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) for a forty-five day review (October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020).

The new Blue Box regulation was released on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 and anticipates to be fully implemented across Ontario in January 2026 and will include:

- Standardize and increase the list of materials accepted in the blue box including paper and plastic cups, wraps, foils, trays and bags and other single use items such as stir sticks, straws, cutlery and plates;
- Transition the costs of the program away from municipal taxpayers by making the producers of products and packaging fully responsible for costs;
- Set the highest diversion targets in North America for the various categories of waste producers are expected to recycle such as paper, glass, beverage containers and rigid and flexible plastic, encouraging innovation such as better product design and the use of new technologies for better environmental outcomes.

The regulation makes producers fully accountable and financially responsible for their products and packaging once they reach their end of life and are disposed; sets mandatory and enforceable requirements for Blue Box collection systems; and gives producers choices for resource recovery services in a competitive market.

The program transition will occur between July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 and December 31, 2025 with producers taking full control of the system by 2026. The City of Peterborough has been informed that the transition date under the new framework for the City is January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Ontario's 1,900 stewards will more than quadruple their annual contribution to recycling, from \$135 million to \$600 million each year. (Source: Retail Council of Canada)

The province will also expand blue box services to facilities such as apartment buildings, long-term care homes, schools and municipal parks in 2026.

Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson stated that the government remains firmly committed to its environmental promises, which were a key part of the Liberal 2019 re-election campaign, He acknowledged that the efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus in Canada will also slow the government ability to move on some of its environment goals. Wilkinson said the same commitment exists when it comes to single-use plastics but the virus is also intruding on that plan. Wilkinson said the intention to move on a plastics ban remains but said he can't say when.

Fort Frances, Ontario was the first Ontario town to ban single use plastics in 2021, however, enforcement has been delayed until June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The bylaw prohibits the

distribution of Styrofoam takeout containers, plastic swizzle sticks, stir sticks and straws; and plastic grocery bags.

### **Other Jurisdictional Experiences**

The issue of single-use plastics and single-use disposables are topical to many jurisdictions across Canada, with numerous communities implementing a range of bans on single-use plastics. There is a uniform goal and intent to reduce the amount of plastic waste and moving forward collectively to reduce the amount of plastic waste and working to address plastic pollution. There are presently bans at the municipal level in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick.

Prince Edward Island banned businesses from providing plastic checkout bags to customers effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, under the Plastic Bags Reduction Act. The ban has now been in place for almost three years and the province has declared it to be a success as Islanders and visitors easily transitioned to putting their goods into paper or reusable bags at grocery stores and retail shops. The Island Waste Management Corporation (IWMC) – the organization that manages waste & recycling across PEI – has indicated that they have seen 30 to 50 times fewer bags in the waste stream since the ban was introduced.

Nova Scotia passed legislation banning single-use plastic bags came into effect in October 2020. The legislation does include some exemptions such as bags used by dry cleaners, tire wrap bags, and bags used for fish and bulk foods.

Newfoundland and Labrador implemented a ban on retail plastic bags on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The legislation does include some exemptions, such as bags used by dry cleaners, tire wrap bags, fish and bulk foods and garbage bags. The Province also banned other single-use plastic items such as straws, cutlery six-pack rings, stir sticks and hard-to-recycle takeout containers in 2021.

### **Federal Level**

In June 2019 the Government of Canada announced that it will:

- “ban harmful single-use plastics as early as 2021 (such as plastic bags, straws, cutlery, plates and stir sticks) where supported by scientific evidence and warranted, and take other steps to reduce pollution from plastic products and packaging”;
- Work with provinces and territories to introduce standards and targets for companies that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging so they become responsible for their plastic waste.”

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, The Federal Government of Canada released a discussion paper Proposed Integrated Management Approach to Plastics Products to Prevent Waste and

Pollution. comprehensive plan including the banning of harmful single-use plastic items including plastic checkout bags, straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery, food ware made from hard-to-recycle plastics (ie polystyrene). Public comments were sought by December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to assist the government to finalize the Regulations by the end of 2021.

The Federal government continues to move forward with a comprehensive plan to address plastic pollution in the long term that includes a ban on certain harmful single-use plastics in the short term. Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault announced Proposed Single-use Plastic Prohibition Regulations were published in the Canada Gazette, Part 1 on December 25<sup>th</sup> 2021 and were opened for a 70-day public comment period ending on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The comments received during this period will be considered when developing the final Regulations.

It is the federal government's intent to finalize these regulations and bring the ban into force as quickly as possible and as early as late 2022 after reviewing and considering comments received.

### **Private Sector – Retail Council of Canada**

The Retail Council of Canada (RCC) is a not-for-profit industry-funded association that represents approximately two-thirds of core retail sales in Canada. The RCC supports the premise behind the bans on single use plastic items, however they prefer that the Province (Ontario) take action to provide a harmonized approach to banning single-use plastic shopping bags. This harmonized approach would allow retailers to avoid conforming to multiple by-laws and varying restrictions across multiple municipal jurisdictions. The RCC has expressed such sentiment via letter to the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks in October 2019 expressing this sentiment and requested a harmonized approach by the province or federal government. These considerations are also being included in discussions around the new producer responsibility model for the Blue Box Program in Ontario.

Given the differences between Provincial jurisdictions similar outcomes are not guaranteed, however, we can certainly anticipate similar legal challenges, especially by CPIA – a very powerful National lobbying association representing the interests of the plastic bag industry. There is some benefit to waiting to see what recommendations and associated timelines that the Province of Ontario intends to enact. This could avoid any potential conflict should we proceed to enact a bylaw prematurely and offer a more harmonized approach for provincial and national retail chains. It would also mitigate concern over varying compliance requirements across municipal boundaries.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Impact**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in mid-March 2020, we are seeing a consistent trend throughout the retail (ie grocery) industry whereby the utilization of re-usable bags are now being discouraged and / or eliminated to pack groceries. This has resulted in many municipal jurisdictions across North America reversing their position on the ban of single

use plastic (LDPE) bags at this time. However, as we emerge from the pandemic and resultant restrictions there is an opportunity with a contract Sustainability Coordinator to implement rewarding diversion initiatives.

## **Other considerations (i.e. Exemptions)**

### **1. Disabilities**

People with disabilities say that a ban on single-use plastics, in particular, a ban on plastic straws, would leave those with limited mobility without a better alternative. Rather than a complete ban on items like plastic straws that some people with disabilities need, some have called on restaurant owners and other places that serve drinks to be able to continue stocking plastic straws so that people who ask for them will still be able to access them. The use and availability of single-use plastics should not apply under the following circumstances:

- Emergency situations;
- Throughout a pandemic (i.e. Covid-19) until the City of Peterborough has been lifted from any / all restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus;
- In cases where single-use plastics are required to guarantee the accessibility and health needs of individuals.

When it is not feasible to provide reusable items, non-plastic alternatives (ie wooden, paper) should be considered as preferential. If no such alternatives exist that meet health, safety and accessibility requirements, purchase of the product should not be restricted. Health, safety and accessibility needs will be considered when selecting alternatives. Obligations under federal, provincial and municipal laws regarding food preparation, handling, storage and servicing, health or accessibility laws (e.g. Ontario Food Premises Regulations, Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, Canadian Human Rights Act) will supersede the Corporate Single-Use Plastics Reduction Strategy and associated policies.

### **2. Environmental**

Banning single use plastics, including plastic bags, has gained public attention largely by its visible presence as litter. While the City of Peterborough does accept plastic bags in the curbside recycling collection program under the Bag-Your-Bag parameters, many residents continue to place loose bags in both the container and fibre streams. Placed curbside in an open top blue box, the material does risk becoming air borne litter on windy days. Also, such material that enters the recycling stream risks contaminating the commodities and reducing downstream demand and value of the blue box commodities sold. Even on its own, the downstream disposition (marketing) of LDPE film plastic comes at a cost of approximately \$5 per tonne, excluding the associated collection and processing costs incurred by the City.

Removal of plastic bags from market promotes sustainable waste diversion. However replacing plastic bags with an acceptable alternative can be difficult and complex. Studies have shown that the energy required to produce a single plastic bag is significantly less than the common alternatives. A British Environmental report indicates bags made from paper and cotton would have to be used at least 3, 4 and 131 times respectively to have the same contribution to global warming as a single LDPE plastic bag. Further studies have shown that when looking into multiple factors including human health, ecology, and climate change, the number of uses required by a single paper or cotton bag to offset the use of single LDPE bag becomes exponentially more expensive. In making these assessments, consideration is given to a product's entire life cycle; extraction of raw material.

The City of Peterborough was the first Ontario municipality to begin collecting LDPE (film) plastic bags in our curbside recycling collection program in the 1990's and this Bag-Your-Bag collection program continues to date. In 2018, the City of Victoria passed a by-law banning single-use plastic bags and the by-law was challenged by the Canadian Plastic Industry Association (CPIA). In 2019, the by-law was quashed by the BC Court of Appeal. In 2020, the Supreme Court of Canada denied the City (Victoria) request to appeal the decision.

### **3. Biodegradable vs. Compostable**

In recent years, there has been a push towards the purchase of “green” products such as biodegradable and compostable products as alternatives to single-use plastics. Many companies have transitioned product packaging to such materials as well, resulting in complexity and confusion around the acceptance of products in the municipal diversion program(s) and the subsequent impact on contamination levels. Biodegradability refers to the ability of the product to decompose in a short period of time. Bioplastics refers to a product made from plants or other biological material other than petroleum.

Biodegradable products are not accepted in the City Blue Box recycling program nor most municipal source separated organics (SSO) food waste diversion programs. As such, biodegradable products are not an ideal alternative to single-use plastics.

Compostable products refer to the ability of the product to be managed at the end of life through composting, anaerobic digestion or other processes resulting from the production of compost. Such products meet ASTM D6400 and BNQ compostable standards. As the City of Peterborough moves forward with the implementation of a SSO (food) diversion program, the list of acceptable products will depend upon the process best suited for the needs of the City.

#### **Alternatives to Single-Use Plastics – Hierarchy**

- Plastic Utensils
  - Offer reusable utensils;
  - Alternative – compostable and / or wooden utensils.

- Plastic Straws
  - Avoid unnecessary purchases, implement an “Ask First” policy;
  - Alternative – reusable or compostable/paper straws.
- Plastic Stir Sticks
  - Avoid unnecessary purchases, implement an “Ask First” policy;
  - Alternative – offer reusable utensil and / or wooden or edible (linguini) alternative.
- Plastic Cups
  - Offer reusable cups;
  - Alternative – offer compostable cups.
- Plastic Water Bottles
  - Avoid unnecessary purchase;
  - Offer reusable cups and refill stations or offer compostable cups.
- Plastic Plates / Bowls
  - Offer reusable plates / bowls;
  - Alternative – offer compostable plates / bowls.
- Plastic Takeout Containers
  - Offer Reusable and recyclable containers (including customer bringing their own)
  - Alternative – offer paper or compostable containers.

### **Peterborough Waste Management Master Plan – Update.**

In September 2021, the City hired a third party professional Ontario based consulting firm – Exp. Services – to undertake the review and update of the existing Peterborough Waste Management Master Plan (WMMP), last updated in 2012.

This initiative will be undertaken through 2022, requires a consulting firm providing recommendations towards the strategic direction of the City WMMP. All recommendations made by the Single-Use Plastics Reduction Working Group will be included in the assessment for consideration for inclusion in the updated plan recommendations.

The timing of this review dovetails well with the Federal and Provincial regulatory initiatives underway that will facilitate the City’s ability to pursue with legislative support.

## **Implementation Timelines**

### **2022 / 2023**

Design and introduce a Single Use Plastics Reduction Strategy pilot project in a limited number of targeted City facilities, with initial preference on City Hall and the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

- Conduct quarterly inspections of facilities including staff feedback to identify areas of improvement, prior to expansion to additional locations;
- Communicate sustainable initiatives through internal (City) newsletters, email communications, social media and internal interaction, including reviews, audits and feedback.

### **2023 / 2024**

Lead by example in line with potential federal and provincial bans on single use plastics.

- Develop and communicate a City facility wide “Single Use Plastics Reduction Strategy”;
- Prepare and standardize an acceptable compostable single-use alternative product list for integration into the City SSO (food) program – targeting 2024;

### **2023 – beyond**

Expand beyond City owned facilities, targeting local DBIA businesses with the implementation of a Citywide Single Use Plastics Reduction Strategy.