

Proposal - City of Peterborough Litter Action Plan

NEED FOR CITY ACTION

There is a noticeable and significant increase in the amount of litter, waste, and hazardous waste on Peterborough's streets, sidewalks, in and around stormwater drains, green spaces, the downtown, and at highway entrances to the city.

The litter is upsetting and unsightly for residents, businesses, and visitors to our city, unhygienic, and harmful to our water and sources of drinking water since the majority of litter ends up in local waterways including and wetlands. Litter degrades our environment and infrastructure, and makes the city unappealing, this in turn negatively impacts economic activity like shopping and tourism, and is a deterrent to business and economic investment.

The City of Peterborough is committed to remaining a Municipal leader in waste management and diversion initiatives. (Single Use Plastics Reduction Strategy Update, Report IPSES22-015, July 4 2022).

Town Ward Councillor Joy Lachica was elected on a 2022 campaign platform that included a commitment to develop a Litter Action Plan, as follows: *Create a new Litter Action Plan to protect our creeks, wetlands, greenspaces and public spaces from the blight of trash, litter and hazardous waste.*

- In April 2020, Global News Peterborough [reported](#) a spike in litter across the City.
- A Letter to the Editor in the Peterborough Examiner in March 2021 called for the City to undertake an anti-littering campaign, noting the large amount of litter on city streets and stating that, "some areas are frankly disgusting" and that "It makes the City look like a dump."¹
- Rotary's Super Spring Clean Up Week in April 2022 was given a proclamation by Mayor Diane Therrien <http://www.superspringcleanup.ca/>
- Urban areas are the primary sources of anthropogenic litter that damages aquatic and terrestrial environments. It is widely understood that litter increased significantly due to the Covid 19 pandemic, e.g., [Globe and Mail](#) article "Litter from single-use food, drink packaging nearly doubled during pandemic, shoreline cleanup program finds"
- There is only a single mention of addressing litter in the City's 2023 Operating Budget, which is about outsourcing litter clean-up in the downtown district, providing \$133,000 in

¹ Bruce Whiteman, Aberdeen Avenue, Peterborough letter: There's too much litter on city streets, Peterborough Examiner. March 20, 2021: <https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editors/2021/03/20/peterborough-letter-theres-too-much-litter-on-city-streets.html>

funding in contract payments to the DBIA “for litter collection, general cleaning on a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week basis, and the watering of hanging flower baskets, etc.”

- Garbage and Recycling collection days contribute to a significant increase in litter as items are scattered and wind-blown.
- Ontarians generate nearly one tonne of waste per person every year. It is estimated that almost 10,000 tonnes of plastic debris enter Ontario’s lakes and rivers each year. Microplastics (plastics that are smaller than 5mm) are found in some areas of the Great Lakes in concentrations greater than those reported in oceans. Almost every plastic item we’ve made since the 1950s is still in our environment.²

See **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND** below for information about the Sources and Negative Impacts of litter, as well as Jurisdictional Examples and Resources.

PROPOSAL

Draft Motion: That staff coordinate and begin to implement by Spring and Summer 2023 a pilot of a Peterborough Litter Action Plan in collaboration with engaged community organizations and businesses to protect our creeks, wetlands, greenspaces and public spaces from the harms of trash, litter and hazardous waste, which in turn will promote greater business and economic development. And, that staff create a dedicated public engagement portal on Connect Peterborough to support awareness and collect public input to inform the development of a completed Peterborough Litter Action Plan to be presented to Council in late 2023 or early 2024 to enable implementation by March 2024.

- Key principles and aspects of a *Peterborough Litter Action Plan* include that it:
 - be adequately resourced on an annual basis
 - be defined by clear roles and accountability for city departments, contractors, business and property owners, and residents
 - set litter-reduction goals that include types and amount, and develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to assess and report on progress and program costs annually;
 - involve conducting a city-wide assessment of litter in the city to measure and track the scale of the problem and identify hotspots and activities that tend to generate the most litter (e.g., around major roadways, fast-food restaurants, vacant lots, transit stops, shorelines, etc.); tools like the [Ellipsis](#), [Litterati](#), [TACO Dataset](#), and the [EPA Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol](#) provide useful frameworks for conducting assessments of litter;
 - prioritize regular and frequent clean-up of litter from in and around stormwater drains across the City by Public Works, especially at spring melt;
 - consider introducing increased fines and social consequences for litter infractions, and enhanced enforcement;

² Government of Ontario. Act on Litter. May 2020. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/act-on-litter#section-1>

- be supported by an awareness campaign to promote and encourage residents to share in the collective responsibility and accountability to prevent litter, to properly dispose of cigarette butts, and clean-up litter;
 - integrate innovative and community-based tools, such as engaging residents/groups to creatively paint garbage bins for key community areas, and hiring local artists to create appealing signage (e.g., see [New York Public Artists in Residence](#) initiatives to have artists address urgent civic challenges through creative practices).
 - be championed by Ward Councillors with leadership to organize and engage local residents in twice-annual neighbourhood and greenspace clean-up events (e.g., spring and fall), in collaboration with Public Works, local business leaders, schools, service clubs, and volunteer organizations (e.g. A Greener Future, Oceanwise Shoreline Cleanup, etc.).
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- Additional considerations include:
 - that the City consider renewing the Single Use Plastics Reduction Working Group, also referred to as the Dream Team, to inform the development and oversight of the Litter Action Plan
 - that the City continue to implement and advance measures to address the plastic supply problem in an effort to minimize the sources of litter and waste, such as by advancing and enhancing the Single-use Plastics Reduction Strategy (e.g. lug-a-mug ideas, repair cafes, etc.) identified in the [2023 Waste Management Master Plan](#)
 - that the City do more pro-active household hazardous waste information campaigns and pick-up events to ensure hazardous waste is being disposed of safely
 - that the City explore phasing-in over the next 2-4 years garbage and recycling bins with lids to prevent wind-blown litter from these bins, which contribute to a significant amount of the litter problem in Peterborough.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Sources of Litter

- Cigarettes are the most frequently littered item, with an estimated [9.7 billion cigarette butts](#) discarded along roadways and waterways.³
- Litter continues to largely be a deliberate act. In a study conducted in 2009, Keep America Beautiful found that [76%](#) of roadway litter comes from motorists and pedestrians intentionally discarding items (as opposed to the [19.9%](#) of litter that comes from unsecured items in the back of trucks or trash receptacles).
- Studies indicate the four main reasons people litter are:
 - Laziness or carelessness
 - Lack of access to trash receptacles
 - Lenient law enforcement
 - Presence of litter already in the area.⁴

Negative impacts of litter

- Litter pollutes water quality, compromises public health and well-being, disrupts habitats, mars the aesthetics of natural areas, and puts a burden on taxpayers.
- Litter often gets mistaken for food by both [land](#) and [marine animals](#), resulting in severe organ damage and even death. It is estimated that [over one million animals](#) die each year after ingesting or being entrapped in litter. A recent **study** analyzed the stomach contents of double-crested cormorant colonies in both Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, and found alarming levels of debris ingestion.⁵
- The plastic from our tossed-out straws and take-out containers eventually [breaks down](#) into much smaller pieces that will [pollute](#) our [air](#), [soil](#), and [water](#). Microplastic pollution is a major human health threat because plastics [contain](#) endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) that affect our variability as a species to reproduce. See [Invisibles: The Plastic Inside Us](#), an Orb Media Investigative report.
- One cigarette butt, as small as it may seem, is partially made of plastic and contains up to 7,000 chemicals.



³ 2020 National Litter Study. Keep America Beautiful.

https://kab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Litter-Study-Summary-Report-May-2021_final_05172021.pdf

⁴ Texas Disposal Systems. How does littering affect the environment? January 2023.

<https://www.texasdisposal.com/blog/the-real-cost-of-littering/>

⁵ Ontario Nature. May 2021. Birds and Plastic Pollution: A Case Study in Toronto.

<https://ontarionature.org/birds-and-plastic-pollution-blog/>

Jurisdictional Examples and Resources

- A Greener Future, Canada
 - [A Greener Future](#) is an environmental non-profit dedicated to leading the effort in sustaining a clean and healthy environment. We Preserve the Environment through Litter Cleanups, Education and Events. (Founder and Executive Director Rochelle Byrne is a graduate of Fleming.)
 - [The Butt Blitz](#) April 1-30, 2023: Each spring, volunteers from across Canada pick up cigarette butts in their local communities, then send them to [TerraCycle Canada](#) for recycling. We hope to prevent future littering by raising awareness of the negative impacts that cigarette butt litter has on ecosystems and health.
- Province of Ontario
 - In 2019, the province published a [Reducing Litter and Waste in our Communities Discussion Paper](#) which outlined provincial priorities including moving to a producer responsibility approach.
 - Since 2020, the Provincial Day of Action on Litter is celebrated on the second Tuesday of May each year in Ontario. The Provincial Day of Action focuses on raising awareness about the impacts of waste on the environment and encourages everyone to take action.
 - The 2023 Provincial Day of Action on Litter is Tuesday May 9.
- Toronto, Ontario
 - [Litter](#): The City has seen an increase in the amount of litter since the start of the pandemic with more people enjoying Toronto's public spaces. Masks, gloves and other personal protective equipment are being littered throughout Toronto's beaches, parks and streets. Cigarette butts make up a large part of Toronto's litter, can take years to break down and contain toxic chemicals that can be released into our environment. *Toronto street litter bins have a special receptacle designated for cigarette butt disposal.*
 - The City has increased the amount of waste bins along the waterfront and in high-traffic parks and is emptying those in high-traffic areas more frequently.
 - Littering comes with a fine of up to \$500 ([By-Law](#)). The City's Litter Operations run 20 hours per day, seven days a week.
 - [Clean Toronto Together](#), #cleantoronto: promotes groups to host a "20-Minute Makeover" clean-up, a School Cleanup Day, and Community Cleanups.
- Guelph, Ontario
 - [Guelph's annual spring clean up](#): Each year over 1,300 volunteers including families, friends, community organizations, businesses, and school groups participate in a spring community clean-up helping to make our parks and neighbourhoods more beautiful, and protecting our rivers, streams, drinking water and local wildlife.

- Markham, Ontario
 - [Taking the Lead – Markham Targets Single-Use Plastics](#), and [YouTube video](#)
 - Awarded the Association of Municipality of Ontario (AMO) [Peter J. Marshall Innovation Award](#) in August 2021: Working with The Recycle People Corporation – a Markham-based waste management company – the City banned Styrofoam packaging from garbage pick-up amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as the community saw a large rise in online purchases delivered using Styrofoam packaging. Residents must use clear plastic bags for their garbage, and those with visible Styrofoam packaging are not collected and the Styrofoam must be dropped off at a Markham Recycling Depot. The initiative has been extremely successful and well received by residents. As a result of the ban and the City's multi-lingual community engagement and education strategy, there has been a 150 per cent increase in the volume of Styrofoam recycled with 30 tonnes recycled in the first six months of the ban.
- Hamilton, Ontario
 - [Team Up to Clean Up](#): Team Up to Clean Up is a year-round city-wide community cleanup program. This program provides all the tools you need to run a community cleanup including gloves, recycling bags and specially marked garbage bags. Approximately 25,000 volunteers participate in Team Up to Clean Up each year and invest more than 45,000 volunteer hours to help clean our community.
- Thunder Bay, Ontario
 - In 2016, the [City of Thunder Bay](#) launched a campaign that focused on reducing litter and promoting pride. *Don't Be Trashy* focuses on litter in our community and how it is everyone's responsibility to not litter our streets, parks, and waterways.
 - Since 1997, Thunder Bay residents have taken part in the annual **Spring Up to Clean Up** event, with nearly 11,000 volunteers taking to the streets and cleaning up more than 250 areas in the city. When you register your clean-up activity with **EcoSuperior**, you'll get everything you need, including clean-up supplies, draw prizes and a public pat on the back on the [EcoSuperior website](#) and in local media.
- District of Muskoka
 - **Clean Muskoka Together** is a year-round Muskoka-wide community litter clean-up program. This program provides all the tools residents and community organizations need to help keep Muskoka beautiful, including gloves, recycling bags and specially marked garbage bags.
 - After your clean-up, deliver the litter and recyclables to a District Waste Facility, and complete a [Clean-up Report](#), here you can let us know how it went, and report any large, abandoned items volunteers found during the clean-up.
- Montreal, Quebec

- [Campaign - Butthead](#): Someone who throws their cigarette butt on the ground
- Vancouver, BC
 - [Put Waste in its Place](#): We have seven full-time Street Use Inspectors working throughout the city to inspect, educate, and enforce a variety of by-laws associated with street cleanliness issues. The inspectors ensure both commercial and residential waste and recycling containers are managed appropriately, investigate illegal dumping incidents and, when sufficient evidence is available, pursue fines or prosecution. In 2021, the inspection team investigated over 4,000 by-law infractions.
- Canada Shoreline Clean-up
 - [Ocean Wise Shoreline Cleanup](#) is a conservation program that provides Canadians across the country the opportunity to take action in their communities wherever water meets land, one bit of trash at a time.
 - Provides resources for leading clean-ups, including waivers and Litter Data Cards for tracking the types and amount of litter picked-up: <https://shorelinecleanup.org/community>
- New York, New York
 - [Clean Curbs](#) program: aims to allow private entities, like commercial property owners and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the opportunity to install sealed, **rodent-proof containers** on City property. These containers will store waste awaiting collection, reducing the piles of bags taking up sidewalk space, and helping to make the City cleaner and safer.
 - The program provides \$22 million toward a litter basket service, \$7.5 million to eliminate illegal dumping and \$4.5 million for cleaning of vacant lots.
 - In 1956, NYC introduced brightly-coloured waste baskets to promote their use.
- Raleigh, North Carolina
 - Under [North Carolina's anti-littering law](#), individuals may be fined and face community service for intentionally and unintentionally littering. Intentional littering in the amount of 15 pounds or less is a Class 3 misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$250 to \$1,000 and up to 24 hours of community service.
- Ireland
 - In 2002, Ireland imposed an 18-cent tax on plastic bags, which cut their use by 90 percent and went a long way in removing them from city streets and tree branches.
- Peterborough, UK:
 - [Litter Action Week](#). Following Litter Action Week, the council will also be spending £120,000 on a Spring Clean from April 1, similar to those the authority used to run before Covid.

- Support and resources for community litter pick-ups:
<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/residents/rubbish-and-recycling/litter-picking-and-clean-ups>
- Report it online button