



## **BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MEMORANDUM**

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**TO: MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

**FROM: S. BRUNET, B.SC.  
MANAGER OF BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY**

**NOTED: A. MILLER, RPP  
GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

**M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

**RE: SINGLE USE PLASTICS BAN AT CITY OWNED FACILITIES AND CITY  
PERMITTED EVENTS**

**DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 2020**

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The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Members of Council with an update on the investigation into the feasibility of banning single-use plastics at City-owned Facilities and City permitted events and the methods to phase in a ban for businesses in the City of Barrie (City) as directed by motion 20-G-021 dated January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

This Memorandum will outline the current status of single-use plastics bans at all levels of government, provide options for further investigation in addressing the problem from a City perspective, and identify the potential for a phased in approach to single-use plastics bans.

### **BACKGROUND**

Plastic litter and microplastics break down in the environment into smaller microplastics that contaminate the natural food chain ultimately impacting our food and water sources. Canada produces 3.25M tonnes of plastic waste a year with 43% of that being packaging related. For example, in 2016, 29,000 tonnes of plastic garbage, the equivalent of about 2.3 billion single-use plastic water bottles, ended up as litter in Canada.

Single-use plastics include various plastic packaging and products that are designed or intended to be used once and then disposed of. This includes materials that are recyclable and disposed of. Single-use plastics are most prevalent in the food service sector and include products such as straws, takeout containers, cutlery, and water bottles, but can also include chip bags, granola bar wrappers and other food preservation packaging, and plastic bags.

Based on a review of other municipal bans, plastic bags, straws, cutlery and stir sticks have been the focus as these are the easiest to control. These products are not considered packaging and can either be eliminated or replaced with a non-plastic alternative. For example, plastic bags could either be replaced with paper or eliminated by requesting that patrons provide their own if they feel a bag is required.

On the other hand, single-use items that are not included in bans frequently are packaging for a product, for example a plastic bottle containing cola or a chip bag. Bans on these items could not be implemented without requiring brand owners to change their approach to packaging processes, and it is not known if there are alternatives available that could meet the same food storage and safety standards as the current packaging.



## **BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MEMORANDUM**

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### **Federal Legislation Supporting Single Use Plastics Bans**

In June of 2019, the Federal Government announced a National Ban on single-use plastics by 2021 through regulations that consider plastic as toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Items such as straws, takeout containers, cutlery, stir sticks and grocery bags are being considered. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the timeline for the Ban was delayed.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, a paper released by the Federal Government entitled "A Proposed Integrated Management approach to Plastics: Discussion Paper", considered single use plastic items to be banned through regulation by the end of 2021. The criteria for this list, i.e. harmful to the environment, recyclable and available alternatives, resulted in 6 target items: plastic checkout bags; stir sticks; six-pack rings; cutlery; straws; and food service ware made from problematic plastics. Environment Canada is currently in the consultation stage and is seeking input to inform the design and implementation of the proposals set out in the discussion paper. At this stage, it is unknown how the proposed ban will be implemented and what the potential impacts may be.

The Federal Ban promotes innovation, however, because it only targets single use plastics that are harmful to the environment, hard to recycle, and in which alternatives exist, it does not promote a reduction in waste generation.

### **Provincial Legislation Supporting Single Use Plastics Bans**

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Bill 82 - Single-Use Plastics Ban Act was carried after the first reading. The Bill amends the Resource Recover and Circular Economy Act, 2016 by requiring the Minister to amend the Strategy described in Section 3 of the Act, to include a plan that identifies measurable targets and sets out timelines for the immediate reduction and eventual elimination of the distribution and supply of single-use plastics in Ontario by 2025, and that requires the immediate elimination of certain single-use plastics. The Ban includes plastic straws, and drink stirrers, expanded polystyrene foam food and beverage containers, plastics bags, items made from plastics that do not biodegrade but merely fragment into small pieces, disposable coffee cups, and plastic water bottles intended for a single-use. As of the date of this Memo, Bill 82 has not received a second reading.

### **Actions by Municipalities**

A number of Ontario municipalities have implemented bans or explored bans as part of a broader effort to reduce single-use plastics. Each of these municipalities have taken a different approach to ban single-use plastics, including voluntary bans, phasing out products at City Facilities, and prohibiting sales of certain products at local stores.

The City of Toronto is currently developing a Single-Use & Takeaway Item Reduction Strategy and has included a ban or "by-request" policy as a potential approach.

Bans in The City of Kawartha Lakes, Clearview Township, City of Kingston, and the Town of the Blue Mountains have taken a phased approach to the sale of single use plastics at municipally owned facilities. For example, the 3 phase approach in the City of Cambridge first eliminates the purchase of single use plastics by the municipality, followed by ensuring catering services no longer use single-use plastics through changes to procurement documents, with the third phase being the investigation into what additional items could be phased out.

Another common approach taken by municipalities is a voluntary ban in which businesses are encouraged to eliminate single-use plastics with participants being promoted and recognized by the municipality. Some nearby municipalities that have implemented voluntary bans include The City of Kawartha Lakes, Clearview Township, and the Town of the Blue Mountains.



## **BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MEMORANDUM**

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### **CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Materials**

When considering a ban on Single-Use Plastics, focus should be given to those items that are commonly provided at City Facilities and City-Permitted Special Events, including stir sticks, plastic cups, straws, beverages in plastic bottles, cutlery and condiment packages.

Based on the ease of control, jurisdictional research on current bans, and available alternatives, it would be reasonable for the City to include plastic straws, cutlery and stir sticks in a potential ban.

A ban would create the elimination and/or replacement of such items requiring alternatives. Currently, many alternatives to single-use plastics tend to be made of a paper pulp, wood, or 'compostable plastic'. The City's future Waste Management Plan would need to consider expanding the scope of the organics diversion model to include such products as currently it does not.

Additionally, collection would need to be extended to facilities and events; a change in the collection contract that will not occur until 2024 when the City transitions under the provincial Producer Responsibility Model. Initially this would not decrease the material to landfill however would begin setting the stage for program changes.

#### **Covid-19**

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, jurisdictions across the world were beginning to ban single-use plastics shifting to non-plastic alternatives and encouraging residents to utilize reusables. But, with health concerns centered around sanitation and hygiene, some have rolled back bans on plastic bags and some retailers are prohibiting the use of reusable bags. Throughout the pandemic, the use of single-use plastics has increased as restaurants are providing more takeout meals.

#### **Accessibility**

Some organizations have brought to light the concern for individuals with mobility issues and their necessity to use straws for consuming food, beverages, and medications. Though available, many alternatives are not suitable due to concerns for oral injuries, the need to sterilize the straws after each use, the need to store and transport reusable straws, and concerns about the longevity of paper straws. A 'By-Request Policy' may address these concerns.

### **CIRCULAR ECONOMY FRAMEWORK**

The City's Circular Economy Framework supports the City's interest in reducing waste. Staff are currently working to advance policy for Phase 1: 2021-2022 of this Framework with the provision of draft policy centered on regulating single-use plastics under the second pillar - Recycle.

Policy direction would take into consideration a phased approach to the reduction in the use of single-use plastic items, the regulations established through the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan's transition to producer responsibility, federal legislation and a communication's campaign to facilitate the movement to the elimination of single-use plastics.

In addition to the initiatives under the Circular Economy, mandatory and/or voluntary bans will assist in promoting behaviours that will reduce the generation of waste and not simply create recycling alternatives that may leak into the environment creating litter or be disposed of in the landfill.

A phased in approach can realize such benefits as:

- Managing bans concurrent with federal and provincial legislative change timelines;
- Manage behavioral change in conjunction with the implementation of Barrie's Circular Economy initiatives;
- Leverage experience from other municipalities;
- Take advantage of demographic related opportunities;
- Manage accessibility and disability requirements; and
- Provided for stakeholder engagement associated with the Circular Economy initiative.

### **OPTIONS FOR THE CITY OF BARRIE TO REDUCE SINGLE USE PLASTICS**

The investigation into the feasibility of banning the use of single-use plastics at City Facilities and at City 'permitted' events, led to 3 optional approaches:

1. Banning the sale of City designated single-use plastic products at City Facilities and City-permitted events;
2. Banning the provision of City designated single-use plastic products at City Facilities and City-permitted events; and
3. Implementing a voluntary ban of City designated single-use plastic products at establishments in the City and special events.

#### **1. Ban the Sale at City Facilities and City-Permitted Events**

With this option, the sale of designated single-use plastic products at City Facilities and/or at City 'permitted' events would be prohibited.

The sale of such designated products would be discontinued by contracted concession services, event organizers and vendors, and non-plastic alternatives would be provided where required. Current concession contracts would need to be altered with suitable alternatives potentially being cost prohibitive and could lead to increases in concession contract costs. The provision of compostable alternatives would be a challenge in that City Facilities are currently not offering an organics collection option.

This may not prevent those frequenting City Facilities, including City staff, from bringing in single use plastics from other sources. Although enforcement in this circumstance is an option it would quite labour intensive.

Additionally, to lead by example, municipal procurement of single-use plastics would need to be eliminated.

These initiatives have the potential to drive a reduction in the disposal of single-use plastics, as well as a reduction in contamination of the recycling collection stream.

#### **2. Ban on Provision/Use at City Facilities and City 'Permitted' Events**

With this option, the provision/use of designated single-use plastic products would be prohibited within City Facilities or at City 'permitted' events.

This option would require contracted operated concessions to discontinue providing single-use plastic items and to only provide non-plastic alternatives where necessary. This option would not prevent the sale of single use plastic products and packaging and could lead to increases in concession contract costs. Staff, patrons and attendees would be prohibited from bringing in single-use plastic items from other sources to facilities or events.

This option provides a wider application than the ban on sale and would contribute to a reduction in single-use plastics in the garbage and in recycling contamination levels. This option would influence customer behaviour to a greater degree than option #1 as those frequenting facilities and events would need to use non single-use plastic alternatives when in attendance at these venues.

However, it may be hard to enforce as it would be difficult to monitor staff and patrons at all City Facilities and events. The City may be criticized for 'controlling' purchasing options and impacting those individuals with mobility restrictions and disabilities that require such items as straws. Prohibiting the use of these items could impede their ability to access and enjoy City Facilities.

### **3. City Wide Voluntary Ban**

This option would encourage local businesses and event organizers to discontinue providing single-use plastics at their establishments or hosting their events free from single-use plastics with an approach suitable to their operation. The City could lead by example and implement a voluntary ban at its Facilities and City Special Events. Those participating in the voluntary ban could be promoted through a Recognition Program with diligence around transparency.

This option would provide time for businesses/special events to phase out single-use plastics, could ease their concern of a financial burden, and has the potential to be far more reaching than a ban solely at City Facilities. No enforcement would be required.

Due to the nature of voluntary programs, there is always variance in participation rates. Perhaps, coupled with Federal, Provincial and the City's Circular Economy initiatives, the development of an associated Outreach Program could positively influence these rates.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Currently, there is limited information about the proposed Federal Ban. It is unknown what approach will be taken, and to which sectors it will be applied. Confusion could be the result of uncertainties around the Federal and Provincial Program requirements and may reduce the ability to create a consistent approach. Staff will continue to monitor for any updates on the proposed Federal Ban and the Provincial Ban.

While waiting for further clarity associated with the proposed Federal Ban, staff will continue to assess the implications of a potential elimination of single-use plastics at City Facilities. Consulting with other municipalities with respect to their successes and lessons learned regarding the implementation of their initiatives will allow staff to better evaluate impacts. Additionally, internal stakeholders will be further engaged to understand the requirements and impacts surrounding contract changes and timelines.

Alternatives to single-use plastics can sometimes not be as environmentally sustainable as initially thought. For example, compostable straws may still use natural assets (i.e. trees) and still be a source of pollution if disposed of incorrectly. Alternatives should consider the function of the gap that plastic centre products and packaging fulfill.

The most effective approach to reducing plastic dependency would be to address the distribution and supply of plastic products. Under the Circular Economy initiative, the Environmental Sustainability Team will continue to pursue avenues to address the supply, distribution and use of single-use plastics from a functional approach where meeting the needs that plastic products and packaging serve can be addressed through a more sustainable lens.