

November 6, 2019

StopPlastics' Submission to City of Toronto staff regarding Single-Use and Takeaway Items

On November 5th, StopPlastics' volunteers did a one-hour beach clean-up on the shores of Lake Ontario in Etobicoke (view video [here](#)). While we were shocked at the volume and variety of plastic waste we found, the exercise underscored how imperative it is that all single-use plastic be banned, beginning with the types mentioned in the Takeaway Items Public Consultation Report ie: styrofoam containers, plastic bags, black plastic containers, disposable hot to-go cups, disposable cold to-go cups, plastic straws, disposable cutlery, white or clear or other plastic containers. And, although not mentioned in the report, the ubiquitous plastic water and pop bottle should definitely be on the ban list as well.

Regulating plastic by banning it sends the correct message to consumers and manufacturers: we can no longer afford to compromise our land, air and water with disposable items, particularly those made of plastic. Plastic is not just an eyesore, it is also causing species extinction, ecological devastation and human health problems.

Please recall that Toronto recently declared a climate emergency and then consider that “between extraction, refining and waste management, the production and incineration of plastics will add more than 850 million metric tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere this year alone-an amount equal to the emissions from 189 500-megawatt coal plants”.

Bans address the root cause of plastic pollution while other methods used to reduce plastic are largely ineffective. ‘Upon request’ regulations don’t convey to consumers that single-use plastic is the threat that it actually is and plastic recycling programs have proven not only to be a dismal failure but have greatly exacerbated the problem. We now know that most plastic sent for recycling is landfilled, incinerated or dumped. Less than 11 per cent of all plastics are recycled in Canada. The plastic that is “*recycled*” is usually downcycled into even less valuable types of plastic which soon end up as trash. Most consumer plastics are economically impractical to recycle. Waste plastic has little market value!

We can no longer afford to nibble around the edges, implementing half-hearted measures such as ‘cutlery only upon request’ legislation. It’s time to go flat out. One only has to spend an hour at the beach after a rainstorm, take a look curbside during spring thaw or witness the overflowing bins on recycling day to know we’re in a crisis.

Plastic has been banned in countless jurisdictions world-wide. Los Angeles, for example, has managed to implement a complete ban on single-use plastic bags. Many governments which have banned single-use plastic such as plastic bags also charge fees for more sustainable alternatives such as paper bags. Workable solutions do exist!

Sincerely,

The Volunteers at
StopPlastics



November 5th beach clean-up of 15 metre area of beach

"This problem is more serious than any of us imagined."

*Pete Myers—chair, founder, and chief scientist of Environmental Health Sciences,
publisher of Environmental Health News—at the [Plastic Health Summit 2019](#)*