



Plastics 46 Eleventh St, Toronto, ON M8V 3G3

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
Canada  
K1A 0A6

November 18, 2021

Re: Reply on behalf of the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change - MIN - 281474

Dear Minister Guilbeault:

Thank-you for the email communication of November 18, 2021, sent from your office on your behalf. It was in response to an email sent to you by one of our StopPlastics volunteers who had asked for an update on the status of the proposed federal ban of the 6 plastic items (plastic checkout bags, stir sticks, 6-pack rings, cutlery, straws, and food service ware made from problematic plastics) that was to come into effect by the end of 2021. We find the government's current position outlined in this letter to be unacceptable. The need to take bold steps to curtail plastic use is even more crucial now than when the ban was announced as the use of plastic has greatly increased as evidenced in our oceans, lakes and forests, and, in fact, everywhere else on the planet. We need bans and limits on plastic now more than ever.

Your letter mentions that the government is aiming for zero plastic waste by 2030, and in your own discussion paper, you mention banning or restricting certain harmful single-use plastics as early as 2021, but not necessarily by 2021. This is a very different position to the one taken before the 2021 election by the Liberals when you said you would ban the six items by the end of this year. Granted, the influx of plastic as a result of the Covid pandemic is a set back but the federal government could have been proactive in procuring non-plastic material for both personal use of Canadians and for use in the healthcare system.

The government's latest iteration on plastic is perplexing. On the one hand you say "the aim is to work with all sectors of the economy (packaging, textiles, electronics, construction materials, vehicles and others) in order to keep plastics in the economy and out of the environment", but on the other hand the federal government is looking to ban 6 plastic items. It doesn't make sense to ban a few items while endorsing others. This approach doesn't foster confidence among Canadians. We question whether the Liberals are up to the challenge to effectively address the issue of plastic pollution. Canadians need a holistic approach focusing on reducing plastic production, not a government that promotes plastic production and is itself part of the problem.

The federal government espouses the benefits of the circular economy as a useful way to deal with the plastic problem and StopPlastics strongly disagrees with this stance. Plastic can be only downcycled a number of times as it degrades, so all plastic will eventually end up in landfill where it will break down into microplastics and enter groundwater and our food chain. It is for these reasons plastic cannot be included in the circular economy.

The federal government needs to get on the right side of history in regard to plastic. The current consensus is that non-essential plastic must be eliminated, and when packaging is needed, it is provided in a sustainable alternative. There is no doubt that plastic is engulfing the planet. We need to take strong measures to deal with this type of pollution. We've got to turn off the plastic tap! The Government says it "believes that actions by individuals, communities and industry can also make a big difference." It seems that The Government of Canada is relying on others to solve the problem. Being a wealthy western country from the global north, Canada has the power to transform this issue with an approach reflective of its position.

Your letter states that "it has committed to diverting at least 75 percent of plastic waste from federal operations by 2030..." Why not 100 percent? You do not explain how federal operations intend to accomplish this. Please provide details.

StopPlastics believes eliminating and reducing plastic through legislative bans is the most effective way forward. This would show the world that Canada is taking the issue seriously and wants to tackle the systemic problems with plastic.

Sincerely yours,

Amelia Rose Khan for StopPlastics

PS This letter has also been sent to your office via email