

Appendix B- Government policy on single-use plastic

The environmental, health and economic costs of single-use plastic consumption are becoming more widely recognized and there is a growing commitment across jurisdictions to phase out or ban its production and use. Currently, the governments of Canada and Ontario are looking into strategies to ban or limit single-use plastics, as is the City of Toronto. The work being done in Canada mirrors an international move to tackle plastic waste, much of which ends up in the oceans.

Government of Canada

In June 2019, the Government of Canada announced its intentions to ban select single-use plastic items such as plastic bags, straws, cutlery, plates, and stir sticks by 2021.¹ The federal government also committed to work with provinces and territories to introduce standards and targets for companies that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging to ensure producer responsibility for plastic waste. All of these measures are intended to be grounded in scientific evidence and aligned with similar actions being taken in the European Union and other countries.

In 2018, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) released a Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste.² This Strategy aligns with the international Oceans Plastics Charter, an initiative of the Government of Canada during its G7 presidency, that has been adopted by many countries as a blueprint for action to reduce plastic waste.

Government of Ontario

In March 2019, the Government of Ontario released a discussion paper entitled, “Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities”, identifying steps the government plans to take to make waste reduction, reuse, and recycling easier for Ontarians.³ In the report, the government committed to working with other provinces and levels of government on the development of an action plan to implement a Canada-wide

¹ Trudeau, J. (2019, June 10). Canada to ban harmful single-use plastics and hold companies responsible for plastic waste. Retrieved from : <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2019/06/10/canada-ban-harmful-single-use-plastics-and-hold-companies-responsible-plastic-waste>

² Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. (2018, November 23). Retrieved from: <https://www.ccme.ca/files/Resources/waste/plastics/STRATEGY%20ON%20ZERO%20PLASTIC%20WASTE.pdf>

³ Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. 2018. Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities: Discussion Paper. Retrieved from: https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2019-03/Reducing%20Litter%20and%20Waste%20in%20Our%20Communities%20Discussion%20Paper_0.pdf

strategy. The province also plans to work with producers and municipalities to harmonize the Blue Box program across Ontario, which may have some implications for single-use plastics⁴.

The *Single-Use Plastics Ban Act, 2019*, passed the first reading in the Ontario Legislative Assembly in March 2019. The Bill amends the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016* by requiring the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks to include a plan for the immediate reduction and eventual elimination of the distribution and supply of single-use plastics in Ontario and the immediate elimination of certain single-use plastics.

City of Toronto

The City of Toronto's TransformTO climate action strategy sets a goal to divert 95 per cent of waste from landfill by 2050⁵. The City has been considering limiting single-use plastics for several years, and in 2018 commissioned a public consultation to gauge the public's support for a ban or other measure to reduce their use. The consultation which included over 20,000 individuals from businesses, health organisations, NGO's and citizens, found very strong support (87-93%) for the reduction of expanded foam containers, plastic bags, black plastic containers, disposable cold & hot to-go cups, plastic straws, disposable cutlery, and white, clear or other plastic containers⁶.

Other Canadian Municipalities

- Vancouver City Council approved the city's Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy in June 2018, following extensive consultation with over 8,000 residents and hundreds of businesses.⁷ The strategy focuses on reducing, and in some cases banning, a number of single-use items over several years including: plastic and paper shopping bags, polystyrene foam cups and foam take-out containers,

⁴ Province of Ontario. (2019, August 23). Waste Management. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/waste-management>

⁵ City of Toronto. (2019). TransformTO Overview. Retrieved from: <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmentally-friendly-city-initiatives/transformto/transformto-climate-action-strategy/>

⁶ City of Toronto. (2019, May 6). Executive Summary – Public Consultation Report on Phase 1 Consultation Regarding Single-Use and Takeaway Item. Retrieved from: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-132912.pdf>

⁷ City of Vancouver. (2018). Single-use Item Reduction Strategy. Retrieved from: <https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/single-use-items.aspx>

disposable hot and cold drink cups, take-out food containers, plastic straws, and utensils.⁸

- As part of a pilot project to encourage residents to drink water instead of sugary drinks, in 2017 the City of Guelph set up vending machines in two community centres to sell stainless steel re-usable bottles for drinking water at a subsidized cost. It was expected that the project would have a short life span but sales continue to do well and the city is looking at options to expand to other public spaces.⁹

International Examples

Many jurisdictions around the world are similarly engaged in efforts to reduce single-use plastics. Some examples include:

- In October 2018, the European Commission approved new European Union (EU)-wide rules to target the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, as well as lost and abandoned fishing gear. The EU will adopt a phased approach with more time being given to find alternatives for some items, but the law is expected to go into effect across the EU by 2021.¹⁰
- In June 2019, the Parliament of Rwanda passed a draft law prohibiting the manufacture, importation, use and sale of single-use plastic items in Rwanda including plastic bags, cups, straws, coffee stirrers, soda and water bottles, and most food packaging materials. The country banned all plastic bags in 2008.¹¹
- In June 2018 the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, announced that India will eliminate all single-use plastic in the country by 2022.¹²

⁸ City of Vancouver. (2018, June 5). City of Vancouver Single-use Item Reduction Strategy 2018-2025. Retrieved from: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/single-use-item-reduction-strategy-with-amendments.pdf>

⁹ Guelph Mercury. (2017, August 2). Guelph vending machines promote drinking tap water over juice and pop. Retrieved from: <https://www.guelphmercury.com/community-story/7483914-guelph-vending-machines-promote-drinking-tap-water-over-juice-and-pop/>

¹⁰ BBC. (2018, October 24). Single-use plastics ban approved by European Parliament. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45965605>

¹¹ The New Times. (2019, June 13). House passes bill to ban single-use plastics. Retrieved from: <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/house-passes-bill-ban-single-use-plastics>

¹² The Guardian. (2018, June 5). India will abolish all single-use plastic by 2022, vows Narendra Modi. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jun/05/india-will-abolish-all-single-use-plastic-by-2022-vows-narendra-modi>