

# Town of Ajax Report



**Report To:** General Government Committee

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**Subject:** **Corporate Ban on Single-Use Plastics**

**Date of Meeting:** March 9, 2020

**Reference:** Motion of Council – September 16, 2019 – Single-Use Plastics Ban

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## **Recommendation:**

**That Council approve the proposed implementation plan and corresponding actions to achieve a corporate ban on single-use plastics; and**

**That Council endorse a Council Charter on Plastic Waste Reduction to showcase leadership as part of a community outreach strategy.**

## **Background:**

The Government of Canada estimates that less than 10 per cent of plastics used in Canada are recycled. This plastic waste ends up in our landfills and incinerators, litters our parks and beaches, clogs our storm sewers and pollutes our rivers, lakes and oceans. These products take hundreds of years to decompose, are harmful to our environment, and pose serious and potentially fatal risks to birds, turtles, fish and marine mammals.

For decades the Town has proactively introduced policies and taken leadership roles related to environmental stewardship and waste diversion including a Waste Reduction Plan; a Green Event policy; a Green Procurement policy; an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan; an 'environment first' Official Plan; encouraging active transportation; being recognized as a Blue Community for eliminating bottled water at meetings, events and in Town facilities; and being a recipient of the prestigious Wege Foundation Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award.

In June 2019, Council adopted a Climate Risk and Resiliency Plan that will guide the Town's Asset Management Plan and long-term budget forecasts, while supporting stakeholders in their work to minimize the impacts of climate change on our community.

As the global conversation on climate change intensifies, and with signals from the federal government on a national ban on single-use plastics by 2021 and the Province's Made in Ontario Environment Plan, Council directed (see attached motion) staff during the September 16, 2019 meeting of Council to:

- Examine the feasibility of a corporate ban on unnecessary single-use plastics;

- Provide fulsome recommendations about how a ban would apply to and impact Town facilities, meetings, and Town-run special events; and
- Consider a business outreach plan to encourage our partners and stakeholders to reevaluate their single-use plastics usage.

In response to this direction, staff immediately took steps to update the Town's Green Event policy and the corresponding guidelines to reflect an internal ban on non-recyclable single-use plastics, including the addition of the following definition of single-use plastics:

**Single-Use Plastics:** Non-recyclable plastics designed to be disposed of after a single use, including but not limited to serviceware, food packaging (ex. individual coffee creamers, ketchup packets, and single-serve jams), grocery bags and Styrofoam materials.

Staff from Planning and Development Services, the Office of the CAO, and Recreation, Community and Culture completed research and developed a proposal for the fulsome implementation for a corporate ban. This proposal was shared with working groups in each Town department comprised of Managers, staff with event and meeting organization responsibilities, and Green Team representatives.

Feedback from each working group was incorporated into the final proposal, which is supported by the Senior Management team, and is being presented in this report.

Sustainability staff in Planning and Development Services will be the lead in ensuring action items are completed and timelines are adhered to upon approval of this plan by Council.

### **Discussion:**

A fulsome implementation plan for a corporate ban on single-use plastics is being proposed for completion within 2.5 years. The plan is proposed to commence immediately for internal practices and procedures following Council approval in Spring 2020, and will be completed with the mandatory compliance for external users and permit-holders of the Town's facilities by Spring 2023.

Staff are recommending the corporate ban be implemented in five distinct phases, which are described with key milestone tasks below.

Staff are also committed to executing a strong public awareness campaign to complement the work being done internally. This includes Council's endorsement of a Charter on Plastic Waste Reduction, and a concentrated outreach strategy to local businesses, community partners and residents.

### Key Considerations

During the research phase and consultations with the departmental working groups, staff identified a number of noteworthy considerations that have been incorporated in the development of the implementation plan.

#### *Exemptions to the Ban on Single-Use Plastics*

Some single-use plastic packaging is required for health and safety purposes. For example, Fire and Emergency Services will keep bottled water with them for people they come into contact with when they have responded to a call. These items and others like them will be identified and

documented as necessary exemptions to the corporate ban to ensure matters of health and safety are not compromised in the absence of sustainable alternatives.

### *Plastic Packaging*

A number of concerns were also raised with respect to packaging. Staff identified that while best efforts may be made to purchase sustainable alternatives, the Town is limited in its ability to control the amount of plastic used in packaging, especially when it is a common or necessary item for which no sustainable alternative exists. Therefore, the scope of work for the implementation of the ban will not include packaging, while the principle of the work remains focused on what is reasonably attainable. Staff anticipate that matters of this kind will be addressed through the national ban on single use plastics.

### *Relationship to the Region's Waste Management Practices*

Staff are also mindful that work related to implementing a corporate ban on single-use plastics will require close consultation with the Region of Durham to ensure all signage and communications are consistent to avoid the confusion about recycling practice with our shared stakeholders.

### *Ensuring External Compliance and Ongoing Enforcement*

The implementation and ongoing enforcement for applying the ban to external users of Town facilities was identified as a substantial undertaking. Staff are recommending as part of the implementation plan that a more fulsome analysis of enforcement be undertaken and a plan for public consultations be developed, which will then inform a mid-way report to Council by Fall 2022.

### *Federal Ban on Single-Use Plastics*

In 2019, the Government of Canada announced its intention to address the issue of plastics pollution by banning single-use plastics (including plastic bags, straws, cutlery, plates, and stir sticks) by 2021, and take other steps to reduce pollution from plastic products and packaging.

While the full details have not been released at this time, staff were mindful of the impact a national ban would have on any internal or external initiatives undertaken by the Town. The mid-way report to Council by Fall 2022 will also include an analysis of impact of a federal ban on the Town's corporate ban.

### Five Phase Implementation Plan

#### *Phase I: Spring 2020-Fall 2020*

The first phase of the implementation plan will be internally-focused and will include strategic communications opportunities to introduce the Town's corporate ban on single-use plastics to the community.

The key milestone tasks for Phase I are:

- Implement the updated Green Event policy and corresponding guidelines with a focus on internal meetings and events
- Develop signage and materials to support staff education initiatives by leveraging the Town's internal Green Team

- Audit all meeting rooms and Town-owned event facilities to ensure three-stream receptacles are available for use
- Tender and award a contract for a Vendor of Record for compostable serviceware to be accessed corporation-wide
- Collect and donate all existing single-use plastic serviceware throughout Town facilities
- Endorse a Council Charter on Plastic Waste Reduction, and subsequent public-facing communications campaign

#### *Phase II: Winter 2021-Spring 2021*

The second phase of the implementation plan is focused on existing and future contracts and vendor relationships. Staff in each department will work closely with Purchasing to ensure there is a renewed focus on a “green lens” when procuring goods and services for the Town. This will include ensuring sustainable alternatives are included in tender specifications where appropriate.

The key milestone tasks for Phase II are:

- Work with Purchasing and each department to review all existing contracts and vendor relationships to determine capacity to comply with corporate ban on single-use plastics
- Execute public education campaign for permit-holders, community partners, local businesses and residents to voluntarily reduce their plastics consumption

#### *Phase III: Summer 2021-Fall 2022*

External enforcement of an internal ban on single-use plastics was identified as a key concern through consultation with the departmental working groups. Phase III has therefore been designed to ensure both staff and Council have a comprehensive understanding of the widespread impacts of the external extension a corporate ban to include patrons of Town spaces and permit-holders in Town facilities.

This phase will include an update to Council with details related to external enforcement, including financial and resource implications and a plan for public consultation.

The key milestone tasks for Phase III are:

- Undertake research for best practices of ensuring compliance for permit-holders at Town-owned facilities, including an understanding of resource requirements
- Analysis of the impact of the federal ban on single-use plastics on the corporation, and identification of any gaps in existing policies and procedures
- Report to Council with recommendations for external compliance and enforcement, and any required amendments to existing policies and guidelines
- Complete public consultations and education prior to the commencement of enforcement for permit holders at Town-owned facilities

#### *Phase IV: Winter 2023-Spring 2023*

The final phase of the implementation plan is focused on the updating of documentation and the commencement of enforcement to ensure compliance with the corporate ban on single-use plastics.

The key milestone tasks for Phase IV are:

- Update all relevant policies and guidelines to be specific to the different kinds of events and meetings that are held on Town-owned properties
- Update all contracts and forms in each department to reflect the update policies and guidelines
- Begin external enforcement of the corporate ban on single-use plastics

#### *Phase V: Ongoing*

Staff felt it important to define an ongoing phase of the implementation plan in recognition that the Town's work is not being done in a silo. There are initiatives related to single-use plastics and waste diversion being completed regionally, provincially and federally, as well as in the private sector, concurrently with this plan.

These initiatives will undoubtedly influence and affect the Town's internal ban, so staff will need to remain engaged and flexible while ensuring the Town showcases leadership.

The key milestone tasks for ongoing implementation of the plan are:

- Continuous improvement for internal waste diversion and ongoing compliance with internal policies and procedures related to a corporate ban on single-use plastics
- Participation in consultations related to the Town's ban held by other levels of government, including the Region of Durham, the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada
- Encouragement of residents, businesses, stakeholders and community partners to reduce their usage of single-use plastics through leadership and public communications

#### **Financial Implications:**

Any financial impact related to any action item or milestone task will be subject to the Town's internal financial policies.

In recognition that sustainable alternatives may have a higher cost than single-use plastic equivalents, staff will undertake the tracking of sustainable purchases through departmental budgets.

This will allow the update report to Council by Fall 2022 to include any financial impacts on the operating budget that are related to the implementation of the corporate ban on single-use plastics.

#### **Communication Issues:**

The corporate ban will require substantial communication to both internal and external stakeholders.

The Town will leverage its internal Green Team to educate staff on proper waste diversion practices, any enhanced responsibilities through the implementation of the updated Green Event policy, and ways to reduce individual plastic consumption.

Externally, staff will focus on the promotion of the Town's successes and undertakings through each phase to the relevant stakeholders, including residents, community partners, the business community and other levels of government.

Staff will also begin sharing information about the Town's corporate ban on single-use plastics to encourage permit-holders in Town facilities and spaces to comply on a voluntary basis. The report

to Council by Fall 2022 will contain a fulsome public communications plan for when external compliance becomes mandatory, including public consultations.

**Relationship to the Strategic Plan:**

The implementation of a ban on single-use plastics relates to three items in the Town's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

*Leading in Our Community*

- Increase community sustainability events and outreach to encourage proper waste education and urban green living.

*Investing in Our Community*

- Evaluate waste management practices at facilities, parks and open spaces.

*Connecting with Our Community*

- Communicate and celebrate the good work being done by the Town.

**Conclusion:**

In response to Council's direction to develop a plan for the corporate ban of single-use plastics, staff are proposing a reasonable implementation timeline with attainable milestone tasks.

The proposed phased approach allows for incremental shifts towards a fulsome corporate ban, while enabling staff to understand and manage unforeseen impacts and financial considerations.

The Town has long-standing history of environmental leadership, and staff believe the proposal puts the Town in a position to continue this good work in alignment with the Province's Made-In-Ontario Environment Plan and the Town's Strategic Plan.

**Attachments:**

**ATT-1: Council Charter on Plastic Waste Reduction**

**ATT-2: Green Event Policy – Updated**

**ATT-3: Green Event Guidelines – Updated**

**ATT-4: Motion of Council – September 16, 2019**

Prepared by:

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