



INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Chair and Members Public Works Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: April 8, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Plastic Shopping Bag Reduction and Recycling (PW07155c) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Gerry Davis, CMA General Manager Public Works Department	PREPARED BY: Anne Winning Program Development Supervisor (905) 546-2424, Extension 5521
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

At the April 6, 2009, Public Works Committee meeting Report PW07155(b) concerning Plastic Shopping Bag Reduction and Recycling was received. The report identified six recommendations to support reduction and recycling of which (b) and (c) stated:

- “(b) *That staff continue to monitor plastic film capture rates in the Recycling Program and ongoing private sector initiatives to reduce plastic shopping bag use, in light of the 2007 Provincial voluntary initiative calling for the 50% reduction of plastic shopping bags by 2012;*
- (c) *That the use of stronger policy tools such as bans or levies to achieve the necessary reduction in film plastic going to landfill be considered by the City of Hamilton if sufficient progress towards the 50% reduction goal is not reported by the end of 2012;”*

The remaining recommendations are ongoing through the City’s waste diversion programs or have been fulfilled through the Clerk’s Department. This information report provides an overview of the progress made related to plastic bag reduction and recycling satisfying outstanding recommendations (b) and (c) of Report PW07155(b), indicated above.

Information:

Report PW07155 was prepared to address a June 20, 2007, Motion of the Waste Reduction Task Force requesting the City to review and report on the feasibility of

banning plastic bags that have the greatest impact on landfill and reducing the availability of such bags. Subsequent reports discussed the value in reducing plastic bags and the diversion potential. However, support from the business community, provincial and federal governments was essential to facilitate the reduction of plastic bag use.

The Ontario plastic bag reduction initiative was introduced in 2007 to reduce the number of plastic bags distributed in Ontario by 50% by 2012. The initiative set the framework of the Ontario Plastic Bag Reduction Task Group led by the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD), the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFIG), the Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA), the Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO), the Retail Council of Canada (RCC), and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). The focus of this partnership was to build a strong framework for reducing the number of carry-out plastic bags distributed in Ontario through application of the 3Rs; Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Almost immediately retailers stepped up to the challenge, raising public awareness, which included increased availability of options such as reusable bags and bins, improved bagging practices at check-outs, in-store incentives encouraging reduction and recycling and in-store collection points for recyclable plastic bags.

Within six months Sobeys Ontario reduced single use plastic bag consumption in their stores by 72%. This was achieved by discontinuing complimentary plastic shopping bags and introducing a five cent fee for single use plastic bags.

Ikea Canada began charging five cents per bag in October 2007, resulting in a 92% reduction of plastic bag usage within six months. The funds collected through these fees were dedicated to a non-profit organization that plants trees to offset carbon dioxide emissions.

Results from this initiative published in the Ontario Plastic Bag Reduction Task Group December 2010 Progress Report indicated:

- Ontario retailers reduced the number of carry-out plastic bags they distributed to customers by approximately 2.5 billion bags - a 58% reduction over three years.
 - 4.3 billion plastic bags were distributed throughout Ontario in 2006
 - 1.8 billion plastic bags were distributed throughout Ontario in 2009
- Ontarians recycled more than 938 million carry-out plastic bags since 2007, utilizing retailer and municipal recycling programs
- Waste audits conducted by Stewardship Ontario throughout Ontario municipalities found that 1.02 billion plastic bags (56.4%) were reused for a secondary purpose such as garbage or recycling in 2009.

The Task Group used data established in 2006 by Stewardship Ontario to authenticate its baseline measures.

Table 1. Plastic Bags distributed in Ontario, 2006- 2009

YEAR	Total No. of Plastic Bags Distributed	Annual % change	Total No. of Bags distributed per capita
2006	4,318,015,282	n/a	340
2007	4,048,803,249	(6.2)	316
2008	3,002,807,799	(25.8)	232
2009	1,813,382,458	(39.6)	139

Table 2. Total number of plastic bags recycled in Ontario by program 2006-2009

YEAR	Retailer Recycling	Municipal Blue Box Recycling
2006	71,219,932	177,780,288
2007	87,407,305	241,902,136
2008	107,032,989	184,265,965
2009	104,031,143	213,828,077
TOTAL	369,691,414	817,776,465

The success of this initiative can be attributed to grocers and retailers using best practices to reduce the number of plastic bags given to customers at point-of-sale, in-store collection points for recycling bags, customer education campaigns, and established municipal Blue Box Programs.

The Provincial target of 50% reduction by 2012 was surpassed in advance through the initiatives of retailers and households. Therefore stronger policy tools such as bans and levies do not need to be considered by the City at this time.