



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 14.3.2
Halifax Regional Council
January 16, 2018

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Councillor Tony Mancini
Chair, Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee

DATE: December 12, 2017

SUBJECT: **Options to Reduce or Eliminate the use of Plastic Shopping Bags in the Municipality**

ORIGIN

Motion from the December 7, 2017 meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Administrative Order 1 – Schedule 5
Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee - Terms of Reference

3. The Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee shall:
 - (a) advise the Council on matters respecting solid waste management, including the responsibility to receive reports and to keep the Council informed respecting all matters related to the solid waste management program in the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATION

The Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council:

- a. Direct the CAO to ensure staff engages with appropriate Nova Scotia Environment staff and members of the Solid Waste-Resource Management Regional Chairs Committee ('Regional Chairs') to discuss options including but not limited to Extended Producer Responsibility ("EPR") for a unified approach to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in all Nova Scotia municipalities, particularly in light of the changing plastic film commodity markets worldwide; and
- b. That staff collaborate to engage with retailers and external experts on options to eliminate or reduce use of plastic shopping bags in the Municipality, and return at a future date with a recommended option.

BACKGROUND

The Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee considered the October 26, 2017 staff report titled "Options to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in the Municipality," at their meeting held on December 7, 2017.

For further background information, refer to the October 26, 2017 staff report (**Attachment 1**).

DISCUSSION

Following a review and discussion of the October 26, 2017 staff report, the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee passed the motion to forward the recommendations contained herein to Halifax Regional Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of this report. Working-level dialogues with Nova Scotia Environment and the Regional Chairs, as well as retail and other external consultations, can be achieved within existing operational budgets.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Not Applicable.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee meetings are open to public attendance, a live webcast is provided of the meeting, and members of the public are invited to address the Committee for up to five minutes at the end of each meeting during Public Participation. The agenda, reports, and minutes of the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Please refer to the October 26, 2017 staff report (**Attachment 1**)

ALTERNATIVES

The Committee did not provide any alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Staff report dated October 26, 2017

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: David Perusse, Legislative Assistant, Office of the Municipal Clerk 902-490-6517

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Item No. 12.1.2
Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee
December 7, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee

Original signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Kelly Denty, Acting Director, Planning and Development

DATE: October 26, 2017

SUBJECT: **Options to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in the municipality**

ORIGIN

On February 2, 2017, the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee passed a resolution “to request a staff report to look at various options to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in the municipality. The report should include options such as:

- *A complete ban*
- *Partial ban, including alternatives such as paper bags.*
- *Impose a fee per bag use.”*

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under section 188(1) of the Charter, Council has the authority to make by-laws, for municipal purposes respecting:

- ... (d) nuisances, activities and things that, in the opinion of the Council, may be or may cause nuisances, including noise, weeds, burning, odours, fumes and vibrations
- ... (f) businesses, business activities and persons engaged in business.

Section 188(2)(a) of the Charter provides that “Without restricting the generality of subsection (1) ... the Council may, in any by-law ... regulate or prohibit.”

Section 335 of the Charter provides that “The Council may make by-laws respecting solid waste, including, but not limited to,

- ... (j) respecting anything required to implement the integrated solid-waste resource management strategy of the Municipality.”

RECOMMENDATION

That the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to ensure staff engages with appropriate Nova Scotia Environment staff and members of the Solid Waste-Resource Management Regional Chairs Committee ('Regional Chairs') to discuss options for a unified approach to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in all Nova Scotia municipalities, particularly in light of the changing plastic film commodity markets worldwide.

BACKGROUND

On February 2, 2017, the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC) discussed possible solutions, including approaches taken by other cities, noting that the retail sector would need to be engaged before any options are implemented. Plastic bags continue to be an issue at the Municipality's compost facilities however, single-use plastic shopping bags and both clear and blue plastic bags are currently used in HRM's solid waste system to hold curbside waste and recycling. These materials are source-separated in the waste stream and are recycled as plastic film following processing at municipal facilities.

In June 2012, Regional Council passed a resolution "that the amount of films and plastics which are not recycled be included in the Solid Waste Strategy Review."

In January 2014 following the 2013 Stantec Waste Resource Strategy Update Report, Regional Council confirmed the objectives of the 1995 Community Stakeholders Committee Integrated Waste/Resource Management Strategy. The objectives are to:

- a. Maximize reduction, reuse and recycling of waste resources;
- b. Maximize environmental and fiscal sustainability of the waste program;
- c. Foster public stewardship and conservation.

Neither the original 1995 Strategy, nor the 2013 Strategy Update specifically recommended any options to reduce or eliminate plastic shopping bags in HRM. The original Strategy outlines a "Reducer Saves" program (user pay) linked to the objectives above, with the aim to have waste management costs borne by the generators of waste and not the property tax base. Additionally, the *Waste Reduction and Reuse Program* component of the original Strategy cites elements including the "establishment and/or support of existing opportunities to reduce or reuse materials (i.e., "wasteless" shopping ... and environmentally-friendly shops)", and "advocating for improvements in packaging materials, moving towards more user-pay and deposit/refund models, and other appropriate waste reduction initiatives".

Relevant Sections of the HRM Charter

The HRM Charter does not provide explicit authority to the Municipality to ban the use of plastic shopping bags. However, section 188 of the Charter gives Council the authority to make by-laws (including those that regulate or prohibit) for municipal purposes, respecting "... nuisances, activities and things that, in the opinion of the Council, may be or may cause nuisances ..." and respecting "businesses, business activities and persons engaged in business." Several other municipalities in Canada have relied upon similar provisions in their governing legislation to implement bans on plastic bags. Section 335 of the Charter further provides Council the power to make by-laws respecting solid waste, including but not limited to "respecting anything required to implement the integrated solid-waste resource management strategy of the Municipality".

The Charter does not provide Council with authority to impose a levy on the use of plastic bags.

Plastic Bags in HRM's Waste Stream

Plastic grocery bags make up over 3% of the litter observed throughout Nova Scotia. Notwithstanding HRM's world-class waste management program and the fact that plastic shopping bags are recyclable, a very small percentage of these bags go to the landfill (typically plastic shopping bags that have been reused as household garbage bin liners (e.g., "kitchen catchers") or to dispose of diapers or pet waste). Since

2015, HRM's Solid Waste Resources Unit has conducted regular waste characterization studies (i.e., waste audits) at the Bayer's Lake MRF (Materials Recycling Facility), the Otter Lake Processing and Disposal Facility, and the Ragged Lake and Miller composting facilities. However, the audit process does not differentiate plastic shopping bags from other plastic bags or plastic films (e.g., cereal box liners, shrink-wrap), so it is not currently possible to quantify the volume of plastic shopping bags in the waste and/or recycling streams.

The People's Republic of China announced in July 2017 that it will ban the import of plastic waste (including film plastic) by year's end. While the details are still being deciphered, this ban will almost certainly change global plastic film commodity markets. A staff report that addresses the potential impacts on HRM's waste-resource stream was recently presented to the ESSC.

Plastic Shopping Bag Use by HRM Retailers

It is estimated that between 300 and 500 million grocery bags are used annually in Nova Scotia, which if downscaled for HRM's population, equates to between 125 and 208 million plastic shopping bags used within the municipality. Numerous HRM retailers sell plastic bag alternatives such as reusable polypropylene, low-density polyethylene, paper, cotton and/or canvas bags or plastic bins to customers.

There are also several large HRM retailers that have chosen not to provide any plastic shopping bags to their customers. Attachment A outlines a partial jurisdictional scan and examples of current practices to reduce or eliminate the consumption of plastic shopping bags in other jurisdictions.

In addition to offering reusable bags, some HRM retailers have opted over time to charge customers a small fee for plastic shopping bags (e.g., \$0.05 per bag), or offer small rebates for the use of reusable bags. Proceeds from such rebates may be put toward the customer's bill or donated to a charitable cause.

DISCUSSION

Given the broad community, economic and environmental interests associated with a regulatory approach to managing plastic shopping bags, this issue is best addressed at a provincial level in Nova Scotia. As the order of government typically responsible for curbside waste and recycling collection, Nova Scotia municipalities should also have a voice in this conversation. The Nova Scotia Department of the Environment, which oversees the Province's Solid Waste-Resource Management Strategy and related regulations, and the Regional Chairs Committee, which addresses solid waste-resource management matters from a municipal/regional perspective, should therefore begin a working-level dialogue on this matter.

Organizations including the Ecology Action Centre and the Retail Council of Canada's Atlantic Branch, have suggested that, in the absence of a coordinated effort by retailers, the provincial government is best placed to address the question of reducing or banning the use of plastic shopping bags on behalf of Nova Scotian consumers and retailers. This is the approach in British Columbia, where the Province has exclusive jurisdiction over plastic bag legislation. A "Made in Nova Scotia" solution to this issue – one that includes municipal input – would ensure that the consumers and retailers face the same plastic shopping bag management measures from one municipality to the next, levelling the playing field for and managing the expectations of all stakeholders. Such an approach would also ensure consistent environmental benefits and waste reduction measures from one municipality to the next. The Province of Nova Scotia can more economically and efficiently deliver educational programs to all stakeholders, and is best positioned to work with retailers present in multiple municipalities. The Province also has clear authority to address the distribution of plastic shopping bags, and may impose a levy on bags if it chooses, using legislation such as the Environment Act or the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) or another statute.

In some Canadian jurisdictions, large retailers and the plastics industry have adopted voluntary plastic bag reduction targets as a means to influence consumer behaviour and reduce plastic shopping bag usage

(Attachment A). Those measures can lead to isolated benefits (e.g., reductions in the number of plastic shopping bags distributed), but they are not consistent between retailers or consumers, they are non-binding, and they do not necessarily influence consumers to reduce their use of plastic bags (e.g., consumers can shop at competitors' stores not participating in the voluntary initiative). There is no assurance that the reduction targets are maintained over time or if they are simply one-time goals. Provincial regulation can send appropriate, consistent signals to retailers (big and/or small) and consumers about reducing or eliminating the use of plastic shopping bags. The Ecology Action Centre has suggested fee-based regulations can generate government revenues that can be reinvested to cover the 'hidden' costs of so-called "free" plastic shopping bags, such as recycling programs.

Consideration of Options

To provide context for consultation with Nova Scotia Environment staff and Regional Chairs, the following broad groups of options can be considered for discussion.

GROUP 1: ELIMINATION OPTIONS

In a 2012 national opinion poll conducted by Angus Reid, Atlantic Canadians showed the highest support in the country for banning the distribution of single-use plastic bags by retailers; 63% of Atlantic Canadian participants supporting the idea.

The following plastic shopping bag **elimination** options should be considered:

1. Complete ban, no education or evaluation
2. Complete ban with public education
3. Complete ban with public education & evaluation

GROUP 2: REDUCTION OPTIONS

The following plastic shopping bag **reduction** options should be considered:

1. Partial ban – Impose paper bags on consumers at the checkout (Retailer pays)
2. Partial ban – Impose reusable bags on consumers (Consumer pays and/or must bring their own bag)
3. Retailer-imposed fee – Charge for any bags provided at the checkout (Consumer pays fee per each bag)
4. HRM-imposed levy for plastic shopping bags – Charge retailers per plastic bag distributed (Retailer pays, at least initially) [NOTE: This option is not currently possible as HRM lacks sufficient legislative authority to impose a levy].
5. Any partial ban option with public education and evaluation of the option's overall effectiveness

Neither biodegradable plastic bags made from vegetable-based materials (e.g., corn polymers), nor starch-polyester bags (e.g., plant-based plastic) are presented as alternatives in this group. Such bags are managed as garbage in HRM, as directed by Council. Wrongly labelled biodegradable or compostable plastic bags can contaminate the compost stream if they do not break down properly during processing, and it is not possible to verify if a bag is acceptably labelled once it is at a composting facility. Therefore, HRM residents are not permitted to use or dispose of these bags in the Green Cart.

GROUP 3: EDUCATION OPTIONS

The following **public education** options should be considered:

1. Public education campaign only, with no evaluation of behavioural change or impacts on HRM's waste stream
2. Public education campaign with full evaluation

The public education approaches required to eliminate or reduce the use of plastic shopping bags by consumers and retailers would be relatively new for HRM, and possibly other Nova Scotia municipalities. Therefore, municipalities may have to hire additional staff to adequately achieve and evaluate the intended educational outcomes. That decision would likely require additional operational expenditures, meaning that this option would have financial implications for municipalities. HRM's clear bag program for garbage

disposal resulted in significant increases in waste diversion through public outreach, and could serve as an important model for public education on plastic shopping bags. That program, however, focused on a service that HRM directly delivers and manages, meaning that ‘message control’ was relatively straightforward. Under any partial ban options for plastic shopping bags, municipalities must depend on retailers, to some degree, to communicate with and educate the public about the measures in place. Similarly, elimination options would have to be communicated to customers by retailers at the point-of-sale, putting the onus on municipalities to educate retailers and provide them with outreach materials to distribute to customers. These factors not only reduce municipalities’ ability to effectively manage the messaging for a public education campaign, but require them to have significant influence over – and the trust of – local retailers affected by the partial ban or elimination measures. There could also be a significant cost associated with producing and distributing point-of-sale outreach materials to retailers throughout each municipality.

GROUP 4: BUSINESS-AS-USUAL OPTION

A business-as-usual option should be considered for comparison to other measures to address plastic shopping bags. This is effectively a “no action” option.

It should be noted that Halifax Regional Council’s consideration of options to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in HRM has already received public and media attention, as it has in other jurisdictions. Therefore, a choice of “no action” on this matter may result in some criticism of the Province, HRM and other municipalities for not addressing an issue of public concern. A choice of “no action” would also fail to address the environmental concerns associated with plastic bag consumption and litter, which the Province has authority to address on behalf of all NS municipalities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial implications associated with staff’s recommendation. Staff expect the working-level dialogue with Nova Scotia Environment and the Regional Chairs committee to incur minimal financial costs which could be captured within existing operational budgets.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with staff’s recommendation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There has been no community engagement in the formulation of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no negative environmental implications associated with staff’s recommendation. The Province of Nova Scotia has jurisdiction to address this matter more effectively and consistently for all stakeholders under existing environmental legislation, namely the *Environment Act* and the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*, or via another statute.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The ESSC may choose to take no action at this time. This is not recommended for the reasons outlined in the report.

2. The ESSC could recommend to Halifax Regional Council that staff collaborate to engage with retailers and external experts on options to eliminate or reduce use of plastic shopping bags in the Municipality, and return at a future date with a recommended option.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Jurisdictional Scan and Examples of Current Practices around the reduction or elimination of plastic shopping bags in North American municipalities.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Alex MacDonald, Environmental Performance Officer (Climate Change Specialist), Energy & Environment 902.490.7160

Report Approved by: Shannon Miedema, Energy & Environment Program Manager, 902.490.3665

Financial Approval by: Jerry Blackwood, Acting Director of Finance and Asset Management/CFO, 902.490.6308

Purpose of Attachment

The purpose of this attachment is two-fold: A) to provide a partial scan of other Canadian and North American municipalities' approaches to addressing options to locally reduce or eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags (section 1); and, B) to outline some examples of voluntary retail sector initiatives that have proved successful in reducing plastic shopping bag consumption in Canada and elsewhere.

SECTION 1

Partial Jurisdictional Scan of Solutions to the Plastic Shopping Bag Issue

It is estimated that Canadians use between 9 and 15 billion plastic shopping bags each year¹, of which between 300 and 500 million grocery bags are used in Nova Scotia alone². Several Canadian Municipalities have passed Bylaws regarding the restriction of single-use bags. Those municipalities include the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Alberta), the City of Thompson (Manitoba), the Town of Leaf Rapids (Manitoba), the Ville de Brossard (Quebec) and the Ville de Huntingdon. The City of Montreal has announced that single-use plastic bags (i.e., those made of plastic less than 50 microns thick) will be banned in 2018³. Reportedly in response to increasing plastic bag litter, jurisdictions in Ireland, Taiwan, France, Rwanda, South Africa, Australia, Philippines and Bangladesh have either imposed heavy taxes on the use of plastic bags or opted for outright bans. In 2008 Seattle City Council imposed a \$0.20 USD fee on disposable bags at grocery stores and in some retail outlets. Friends of the Irish Environment in County Cork reported that the approximate \$0.20 USD tax placed on plastic bags in that country has led to a 95% reduction in their use over time.

In 2015 the Victoria City Council (British Columbia) requested staff direction on a ban on single-use retail plastic bags. The request resulted in a series of recommendations over time and an eventual decision in March 2017 to conduct a six-month consultation with community stakeholders⁴. City of Victoria staff recommended that engagement activities could include dialogue around the creation of reusable bag donation centres, or consumers reporting their rate of bag usage. Victoria staff also recommended a public art competition with a \$2,000 prize to help identify a design for the City's own reusable bags.

In 2016 the City of St. John's passed a motion to support Municipalities Newfoundland & Labrador's campaign to push the provincial government to ban single-use plastic bags across the province⁵. The City purportedly lacks the legislative authority to impose a ban. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) criticized the City's approach saying that "voluntary plastic-free" approaches would be preferable for small business to regulated approaches. The Municipality of Fogo Island opted for a voluntary ban on plastic shopping bags and began distributing paper bags to consumers⁶.

The City of Toronto investigated the possibility of banning single-use plastic bags as part of its waste diversion initiatives. In 2009, the City adopted a decision to require retailers charge \$0.05 for single-use plastic bags; this was accompanied by a public education campaign. Between 2008 and 2012, waste audits demonstrated that there was a 53% reduction in waste after the fee was in effect; retail plastic bags represented 0.8% of Toronto's litter stream in 2012. In June of 2012, City Council decided to rescind the \$0.05 charge and mandate a ban on single-use plastic bags. However, the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and Canadian Plastic Industry Association brought a legal action against the City to quash the motions related to the Council decision concerning the ban. The forthcoming ban was then removed when the City (with Council's authorization) entered into a court-approved Agreement. The merits of the ban or how the ban had been adopted were never evaluated by the court. Council directed staff to consider the benefits and implications of a range of options to reduce plastic bags. Stakeholder outreach included consultation meetings with specific industry and environmental stakeholders and a public opinion survey.

The following options were considered by **Toronto City Council**:

Toronto's Option 1: No Mandatory Fee or Ban – with this option, retailers could choose whether to charge for plastic bags and consumers could choose where and how they shop (i.e., reusable bags, free bags, or fee for bags). The consultation indicated that these plastic bags could be reused;

Jurisdictional Scan and Examples of Current Practices Around Plastic Shopping Bags

however, the environmental stakeholders did not support this option as it did not further actions to reduce the use and disposal of plastic bags.

Toronto's Option 2: Mandatory Fee – with this option, a municipal by-law would implement a fee for single-use shopping bags. Although this option, along with public education, demonstrated a reduction of the use of single-use shopping bags, there was disagreement whether the fee should be mandated by retailers or implemented on a voluntary basis. This option could effectively encourage the reduction of waste, but retailers were concerned over a loss of business for smaller retailers. During the original ban, some retailers did not charge for plastic bags. If the by-law were to be implemented, monitoring and enforcement for compliance would need to consistently take place.

Toronto's Option 3: Mandatory Ban – this option would prohibit retailers from distributing plastic bags through a municipal bylaw. Alternative carryout bags (such as paper or reusable bags) could be provided by retailers for free or for a charge. This option was supported by environmental groups as the most effective option to reduce plastic bags but was not favoured by staff and the majority of stakeholders. The stakeholders believed that the ban would have detrimental economic implications for residents, retailers, and the plastic bag manufacturing industry.

Toronto's Option 4: Comprehensive Education and Communication Plan – during consultations, the Canadian Plastics Industry Association and Canadian Plastic Bag Association introduced a fourth alternative. This alternative included a voluntary charge and a comprehensive education and communication campaign, focusing on reducing the use of plastic bags, reusing the bags where possible, and recycling the bags at the end of their life.

Results of the City of Toronto staff report indicated that there was a consensus amongst stakeholders that education is important for all options being considered. Although not the most effective Option, Option 4 (voluntary fee and public education campaign) was perceived to have had some impact on the city's waste reduction goals and less of an impact on retailers, the plastics industry and consumers. The staff report detailed a strategy for communication and education for the City.

SECTION 2

Partial Scan of Private Sector Practices and Voluntary Initiatives

The Recommendation Report provides an overview of some HRM retailers' voluntary approaches to eliminating or reducing plastic shopping bag consumption, i.e., the Quinpool Road "bagless" Superstore and Pete's Frootique's bag fee, respectively. Some retailers even make a charitable donation or offer a rebate to customers for using their own bag, such as Pete's Frootique's "RePete Bag Program".

Through its nationally implemented bag fee, Loblaws decreased the number of grocery bags it issued to customers by 6 billion between 2007 and 2014⁷. Despite those results, the company was still influenced by consumers to drop its bag fee in at least 2 of its Toronto locations. The retailer similarly eliminated its bag fee in Atlantic Canada in 2010, citing a desire to reduce costs for customers. Loblaw Companies Ltd. had redirected some of its bag fee revenues across Canada to charitable causes, including reportedly donating more than \$8 million to WWF Canada by 2012.

Other large Canadian retailers, including Home Depot and Indigo Books & Music, have phased out their bag fees in response to criticism that their fees were applied nationally across the chains while only a few municipalities nationwide had imposed mandatory fees on plastic bags⁸. The elimination of the bag fees was seen as a way to avoid penalizing all Canadian consumers for plastic shopping bag management measures that were very localized.

Jurisdictional Scan and Examples of Current Practices Around Plastic Shopping Bags

Earlier this year Bulk Barn launched its “Reusable Container Program” to encourage people to provide their own containers for bulk goods⁹. The retailer still has a \$0.05 bag fee in place but cites the new container program as a means for customers to reduce their carbon footprint.

Some Canadian jurisdictions have spearheaded voluntary initiatives that bring together retailers and industry associations to reduce plastic shopping bag consumption. Such voluntary initiatives seem to be driven by memoranda of understanding between governments and the private sector. Some examples follow.

In 2007 the Province of Ontario, through the multilateral Ontario Plastic Bag Reduction Task Group¹⁰, put in place a voluntary initiative for retailers to reduce plastic shopping bag use by 50% by 2012. The initiative resulted in a 69.6% reduction in the number of plastic bags distributed over a 4-year period. In fact, the Sobeys Ontario group of grocers achieved a 72% reduction by 2012¹¹ in its stores.

Voluntary plastic bag reduction initiatives in Quebec and Manitoba have also proved effective at reducing consumption by the stated goal of 50%. Quebec’s retail sector achieved a 52% reduction in bag consumption 2 years ahead of the 2012 target date. By 2015 Manitoba achieved 72.5% diversion of plastic bags from landfills through its *Bag up Manitoba Plastic Bag Challenge* to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags¹². That 5-year program was established in 2010 and the province aims to set an even higher reduction target for 2020¹³.

In 2010 Quebec retailers and plastics industry associations co-launched the Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags with that province’s government.

Retailers in British Columbia launched their own voluntary plastic shopping bag reduction initiative and fee program without government involvement.

Chambers of Commerce in North American cities and elsewhere have voiced concerns both for and against bans on plastic shopping bags. Some examples follow.

In response to Victoria City Council’s reconsideration of a ban on ‘single-use plastic bags’, British Columbia’s Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce suggested that “any effort to reduce the use of plastic bags in stores should be done at the regional level”.¹⁴ The Chamber observed that many local businesses were already taking measures to reduce bag consumption, and suggested that voluntary measures would be more effective. Regional-level measures were considered to be a more balanced approach for retailers given that they would create a level playing field across the province or region.

In March of 2017, North Carolina’s Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce petitioned the State government to maintain a 2010 ban on the use of retail plastic bags in the state’s popular Outer Banks region, which requires businesses to offer a refund to customers with their own reusable bags. The region’s sensitive barrier island ecosystems provide unique wildlife habitat and bring in up to \$1 billion in tourism revenue each year through beachgoers. Using an omnibus bill focused on other measures, State legislators quietly repealed the ban on retail plastic bags in late spring.

In 2016 the Canadian Federation of Independent Business took issue with the City of St. John’s decision to merely support another organization’s request for a provincial ban on plastic shopping bags¹⁵. The Federation cited existing retailer efforts and the benefits of voluntary measures as the basis for its criticism.

¹ “Plastic Bag Facts” reported by the BC-based organization Greener Footprints. <http://www.greenerfootprints.com/plastic-bag-facts/> [Accessed June 26, 2017]

² Figure cited in 2008 by Loblaw Companies Limited, based on information provided by Nova Scotia Environment. <http://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/atlantic-superstore-in-halifax-becomes-loblaw-companies-first-bagless-store-in-nova-scotia-535389271.html>

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- ³ In its 25/25 Solution for Montreal, the Canadian Plastics Industry Association cites numerous problems with this ban given that it will drive retailers to use thicker plastic bags that require more polyethylene source material and more energy to produce and recycle. <https://monsacintelligent.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ville-de-MONTREAL-Council-FINAL-ENG-.pdf>
- ⁴ As reported by Jean Paetkau of CBC News British Columbia, March 23, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/victoria-plastic-bag-ban-loveday-holt-1.4037897>
- ⁵ As reported by Carolyn Stokes on CBC Newfoundland & Labrador, Sept. 26, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/plastic-bag-ban-business-municipalities-corner-brook-councillor-1.3779193>
- ⁶ As reported by CBC News Newfoundland & Labrador, August 17, 2015. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/no-more-plastic-bags-for-shoppers-on-fogo-island-1.3193018>
- ⁷ As reported by Toronto Star staff in Metro Toronto, June 15, 2014. <http://www.metronews.ca/news/toronto/2014/06/15/retailers-going-back-to-free-plastic-bags.html>
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Bulk Barn Corp. 2017. Reusable Container Program website. <http://www.bulkbarn.ca/en/Reusable-Container-Program>. [Accessed June 23, 2017]
- ¹⁰ Comprising the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, the Canadian Plastics Industry Association, the Recycling Council of Ontario, and the Retail Council of Canada.
- ¹¹ Sobeys Inc. 2012. Sobeys Ontario surpasses voluntary provincial plastic bag reduction target. Press release: Newswire.ca, Mississauga, ON. Oct 9, 2012: <http://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/sobeys-ontario-surpasses-voluntary-provincial-plastic-bag-reduction-target-538651602.html> [Accessed June 26, 2017]
- ¹² Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba. 2015. 1.45 Million Plastic Bags Kept Out of Landfills by Manitoba Students. Press Release. <http://simplyrecycle.ca/1-45-million-plastic-bags-kept-out-of-landfills-by-manitoba-students/> [Accessed July 24, 2017]
- ¹³ Government of Manitoba. 2014. Recycling and Waste Reduction: A Discussion Paper. http://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/envprograms/recycling/pdf/mb_recycling_strategy_2014.pdf [Accessed July 24, 2017]
- ¹⁴ See footnote 4 for full reference.
- ¹⁵ See footnote 5 for full reference.