

May 31, 2019



RE: SYNOPSIS/ADDENDUM TO YREA COMMENTS ON SINGLE USE PLASTICS ITEM 14.3, MAY 28, 2019 RICHMOND HILL COUNCIL MEETING

**Single use plastics** - What is single use? A bag of sliced bread, a bag of carrots or apples is also used just once in this form of packaging. Then there are plant pots, returnable to Sheridan & Loblaws in the garden centre season but what about all the other outlets selling potted plants throughout the year? Outdoor furniture, lumber & decking, planters, insulation <https://www.demilec.ca/Products/Closed-Cell/Heatlok-Soya-HFO.aspx> are being made with recycled plastics. Plant pot take back program?

**Non-stretchy polypropylene bags** (coded 5) are often used for organic produce because they require 65% less plastic than a clamshell yet these bags would be placed in the paper stream by an automated sorting system and contaminate it. Improved automated sorting could help with higher utilization rates and less contamination as could more personnel to do manual sorting. (Black plastic, also coded 5 pp could also be recycled with improved more efficient sorting technologies).

**Compostable cups** – This is an easy switch for all municipal uses. Cups are plainly marked compostable and are lined with corn starch rather than plastic. Readily available locally – [https://www.staples.ca/compostable+disposable+cups/directory\\_compostable+disposable+cups\\_20051\\_1\\_20001](https://www.staples.ca/compostable+disposable+cups/directory_compostable+disposable+cups_20051_1_20001) <https://thecupstore.ca/custom-printed-compostable-paper-cups.php> Contacting the head offices of Tim Horton's, McDonalds & Starbucks outlining the benefits of switching to compostable cups could herald a very positive green shift.

**Take back plastic bags** – At the moment Loblaws, Longos & Metro take back plastic bags at their stores. What about Sobeys, Food Basics & No Frills? A letter requesting this? YREA has had some success in this way going back as far as 2008 when we wrote to all major grocers. Another letter to Loblaw regarding excess packaging at T&T has had an impact, as they have reduced produce packaging and their take out containers are all compostable cardboard. (See letter in separate attachment).

**Compostable produce bags** – A switch to compostable bags for produce would reduce an untold amount of plastic as these bags could then be used in our kitchen green bins. We need to be aware that there is a distinction between compostable & biodegradable. Compostable will turn into compost, whereas biodegradable will only break down into smaller and smaller pieces of plastic.

**Streamline practices across municipalities** – When doing spring clean ups, among the most common items found that have blown out of blue boxes are Styrofoam & stretchy plastics. They are not acceptable blue box items, yet new residents who have moved to York Region from Toronto are not aware of this as these items are recycled there. Expand YR recycling to include polystyrene & plastic?

**Shopping malls & reusable dishes** - When Cadillac Fairview was retrofitting the Eaton Centre, YREA strenuously advocated with their Sustainability Coordinator of the time that the food court change to reusable dishes instead of Styrofoam and gave successful examples from other parts of the world. This did come to pass and we are pleased to see this action expanding to other shopping malls. However, many other fast food outlets greenwash by having separate bins for waste, paper, cans/bottles but have been observed dumping all their waste in one garbage bin. We cannot over stress the importance of mandating the streaming of waste properly at all fast food outlets and malls.

**Cellophane to replace plastics** – cellophane packaging which is plant, not petroleum based and composts in home & municipal systems within 10 days is a sustainable alternative. Industrial hemp stalks & other agricultural residues could be a source of cellulose to produce compostable cellophane packaging as a replacement for plastic, generating valued added income for farmers & contributing to the circular economy. Another robust source could also be the invasive Phragmites, which is almost impossible to eradicate. Cellophane is being used for lining coffee bags, some organic packaging & clear portions of paper bread bags. The rip test can tell the difference. Cellophane tears, plastic doesn't.

**Incineration** – YREA has strongly advocated against incineration from the outset. Besides the horrendous human & environmental impacts of the resulting pollutants in the form of dioxins, furans & toxic fly ash, we would just be making more plastic by not recycling it.

**Considering a ban** – YREA has advocated for a ban on plastic shopping bags & Styrofoam for years. Perhaps now is the time to finally implement this. If PEI can do it, so can the rest of us. We do not think that paper would be a suitable replacement as it would only mean eventually cutting down more trees. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-plastic-bags-ban-exemptions-1.4697663>

In closing, York Region Environmental Alliance, as a member of the Ontario Zero Waste Coalition, commends this initiative which has the potential of truly making a green shift in Richmond Hill, York Region and beyond - to other municipalities, provincially & nationally.