



## Plastics and their management

Plastics, including single-use plastics (SUPs), and their management is a topic that will be discussed throughout development of the Waste Plan. Conversations will explore why the management of plastics is a global issue and what the City can do to compliment or expand on actions taken by other jurisdictions.

### Introduction

The benefits of plastics are undeniable. The material is cheap, hygienic, lightweight, resistant, easy to mold and is utilized in a wide range of applications. These qualities have led to a boom in the production of plastic over the past century. This trend is predicted to continue as global plastic production rises over the next 10 to 15 years.

However, plastic pollution is a global challenge that we cannot afford to ignore. Plastic waste ends up as litter in parks and beaches and pollutes rivers, lakes and oceans. The Government of Canada [reports](#) “every year, one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals worldwide are injured or die when they mistake plastic for food or become entangled”. Plastics also have an impact on climate change as [greenhouse gases](#) are emitted through their production, transportation and disposal.

SUPs are plastic products that are designed to be used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. These include grocery bags, food packaging, plastic straws, cutlery and take-away containers/cups. Many of these items serve valuable functions, such as storage, food waste reduction and transportation. However, they can be difficult to collect and difficult to recycle and, as a result, are a large source of plastic pollution. According to a 2018 [report](#) by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, “single-use plastics are more than a third of all plastic waste and are among the top twelve most collected items during Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanups”.



#### Plastics facts:

- *Every year, Canadians throw away over 3 million tonnes of plastic waste. This represents up to \$8 billion per year in lost value and wastes valuable resources and energy*
- *In Canada, up to 15 billion plastic bags are used every year and close to 57 million straws are used daily*
- *Every year, one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals worldwide are injured or die when they mistake plastic for food or become entangled*
- *Globally, one garbage truckload of plastic waste enters the ocean every minute*
- *By improving how we manage plastic waste and investing in innovative solutions, the Canadian government estimates that we can reduce 1.8 million tonnes of carbon pollution, generate billions of dollars in revenue, and create approximately 42,000 jobs.*

June 10, 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau news release

With less than 10 per cent of plastic used in Canada getting recycled, there is a need to rethink the way we manufacture, use and manage plastics. Ultimately, tackling this issue will require governments to regulate, businesses to innovate and individuals to act.

#### What is being done by governments?

Over the past number of years, international governments have begun to address the challenges associated with poor plastic recycling rates, poor plastic [recycled content rates](#) and poor plastic reuse. The EU has assumed a leadership role in addressing the problem of SUPs and identifying solutions. In 2019 the EU enacted a new Directive – Single-Use of Plastics Directive – aimed at reducing targeted plastic products in the environment. It requires member states take action in four key ways:

- Ban certain single-use plastics
- Establish [extended producer responsibility](#) schemes for SUPs



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- Introduce design requirements to ensure caps and lids on SUP beverage containers remain attached to the container
- Collect 90 per cent of single-use plastic bottles, with caps and lids, by 2029.

The Government of Canada has also expressed their intent on taking a number of steps to reduce plastic pollution, including:

- Banning SUPs as early as 2021 and introducing regulations that require products to contain a set amount of recycled content
- Working with provinces and territories to ensure companies that manufacture plastic products are responsible for managing the collection and recycling of this plastic waste
- Investing in new technologies that help turn plastic waste into valuable resources
- Diverting at least 75% of plastic waste from federal operations by 2020

Canada has also mobilized international support by launching the [Ocean Plastics Charter](#). The Charter has been endorsed by 21 governments and outlines the need for urgent action to address the impacts of litter on the health of our oceans, seas, coastal communities and ecosystems.

Action has been taken by several jurisdictions in Canada to tackle the issue of SUPs. There are almost 30 individual SUP product bans implemented or pending in 15 Canadian jurisdictions, with British Columbia municipalities taking the lead. Most SUP bans target plastic bags, with 15 Canadian jurisdictions having implemented SUP bag bans or intending to implement bans. Some jurisdictions are also banning or intending to ban plastic straws and polystyrene cups and containers.

### What is being done by corporations?

The pressure from government and citizens to reduce packaging and SUPs has forced international corporations, such as Coca-Cola Co. and McDonalds to respond. Some recent announcements include:

- Coca-Cola will aim to collect and recycle every bottle or can it sells globally by 2030.



## Solid Waste Master Plan

### Plan directeur des déchets solides

- By 2025 all McDonalds packaging will be 100 percent recyclable.
- Colgate-Palmolive Co. has developed toothpaste tubes that can be fully recycled and will share the intellectual property of its process with competitors.
- The beer giant Heineken will replace the plastic ‘six-pack rings’ that hold together its beer and cider cans with recycled cardboard and will eliminate the use of shrink-wrapping from its packaging.
- KFC Canada will start testing the use of bamboo buckets starting in 2020 as packaging for poutine, with the intent to expand to other foods over time.

#### How is this relevant to the Solid Waste Master Plan?

The Waste Plan will explore steps that the City can take to manage plastics, within its regulatory ability, that compliment actions taken by other levels of government and corporations. Ideas and options will be discussed throughout Waste Plan development and may include, but are not limited to:

- bans and levies to reduce the amount of single-use plastics used in government facilities and businesses;
- procurement strategies to increase recycled content in products and packaging; and
- education and promotional programs to encourage responsible purchasing and increase recycling rates of these products.