



City of Moose Jaw

COMMUNICATION # EC-2019-0188

TITLE: Single Use Plastic Bags
TO: Executive Committee
FROM: Department of Engineering Services
DATE: October 1, 2019
PUBLIC: PUBLIC DOCUMENT

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the City recommend and encourage a voluntary ban removing single use plastic shopping bags from willing stakeholders within the City.

THAT the City support the SUMA Official position formally by resolution and request an update on the progress that the other levels of government and jurisdictions have determined how to eliminate or reduce single use plastic items; and

THAT the City include education on reducing or replacing single use plastic bags as part of its recycling communication to the community.

TOPIC AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information on single-use plastic bags and to provide City Council recommendations to assist in determining if the City should consider banning the usage of single use plastics bags.

BACKGROUND

The City of Moose Jaw was approached by the Youth Committee and the A.E. Peacock Collegiate who brought a presentation titled "Moose Jaw Plastic Bag Strategy" to the April 8, 2019 regular meeting of City Council.

Subsequently, the following motion was adopted by City Council at the regular meeting of April 22, 2019:

"THAT Administration prepare a report to be brought back to Executive Committee for consideration of banning plastic bags within the City of Moose Jaw."

Single use plastic bags or plastic shopping bags are primarily used to transport goods from an establishment such as a business to the home of the consumer. They are typically lightweight, inexpensive, convenient and made of thin plastic.

A few municipalities across Canada have started to implement single use plastic shopping bag bans. The following table illustrates the activity across Canada:

Province	Municipalities	Combined Municipality Population
Alberta	Jasper, Wetaskiwin, Wood Buffalo	88,834
British Columbia	Courtenay, Cumberland, Qualicum Beach, Rossland, Saanich, Salmon Arm, Sooke, Tofino/Ucluelet, Victoria (recently overturned by provincial government)	193,892
Manitoba	Leaf Rapids, Snow Lake, The Pas, Thompson	20,672
New Brunswick	Moncton/Dieppe/Riverview	116,940
Prince Edward Island	Entire province	153,244
Quebec	Many small communities including Montreal	4,887,550
Population participating in single use plastic ban		5,461,132
Canadian Population		37,060,000
% participating in single use plastic ban		14.7%
%participating in Canada, excluding Quebec		2.0%

***Information provided by Retail Council of Canada**

All the communities listed above have various exemptions in place on the types of bags that are banned. Some common exemptions are as follows:

- Loose, bulk goods such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains, or candy
- Small hardware items such as nails, screws, nuts and bolts
- Bags used to contain or wrap frozen foods, meat or fish, flower, potted plants, bakery foods
- Dry cleaning
- Live fish
- Bags distributed to food banks, homeless or animal shelters
- Medical supplies

The Province of Ontario has introduced Bill 82, *Single-Use Plastics Ban Act, 2019* but to date it has only received its first reading. The Federal Government has also announced a plan to move away from single use plastics as early as 2021. This direction may require

more than just banning single use plastic shopping bags focusing on all single use plastics including items such as drinking straws, cups, cutlery, water bottles etc.

DISCUSSION

The debate of paper versus plastic is a complex one. Research and analysis on environmental impact varies depending on the parameters included, the scope of the analysis and where impacts are allocated. Some research indicates a comparable paper bag consumes four times as much energy and three times the CO² footprint to produce as a single use plastic bag (Northern Ireland Assembly). Other research indicates plastic takes hundreds of years to degrade and even when it does, it is still plastic at a molecular level so there are environmental concerns.

Single use plastic bags are mainly a nuisance windblown litter (along with Styrofoam, paper, cardboard and other packaging materials) in Moose Jaw and have little effect on airspace within our landfill. Single use plastic bags or low-density polyethylene (LDPE) have a density of 917 kg/cubic meter. An LDPE bag has an average weight of 8 grams and the City's landfill compactor can compact a range, depending on conditions, of 750 - 1000 kg/cubic meter. Using the low end of this compaction range indicates that 93,750 bags could be compacted into one cubic meter. The current landfill annual airspace consumption is approximately 60,000 cubic meters. If the city sent 5,000,000 single use plastic bags to the landfill, it would require 53.3 cubic meters of space to dispose of or 0.09% of the annual airspace consumption.

The products that could be used as an alternative would most likely be paper bags or reusable bags. It is unknown what the impact of changing to one of these alternative products might be, including how many could end up in the waste stream. In the City of Moose Jaw, single use plastic bags had been acceptable to recycle in the household recycling program, in place since 2016. Despite this, thousands of plastic bags have still been disposed of at the landfill annually. This highlights some of the challenges around changing habits in the community.

A single use plastic bag ban will require a substantial effort that forces change of social behavior and habits for all consumers and suppliers. Therefore, it would be necessary to engage all stakeholders (consumers and suppliers) that would be affected by this change. These stakeholders would include the general public, restaurants, retail stores, grocery stores, commercial businesses (large and small), and medical institutions. Research into issues that may arise from a single use plastic bag ban would need to be detailed and methodical. This could require: an in-depth look into user habits, what other municipalities have done (as most of these bans take a few years to come to fruition), advertising, public information sessions, and stakeholder meetings to ensure that any transition away from single use plastic shopping bags is understood by all users.

Bylaws would need to be established to govern a single use plastic shopping bag ban. The key requirements of the ban should outline definitions, criteria, penalties for non-compliance, enforcement and exemptions if any. Enforcement will require numerous resources such as staff, equipment and material to administer after a ban comes into effect.

This is a larger issue than just Moose Jaw due to the resources required to impose industry change and social change, therefore it is recommended that the City support the Federal or Provincial Government to enact policy that will be much more effective in acquiring industry compliance and social change. The private sector and businesses may also proactively adjust its practices around the use of plastic bags.

This recommendation is consistent with a 2019 Resolution of SUMA:

"Whereas urban municipalities deliver critical solid waste management services to residents, fundamental to quality of life in Saskatchewan; and

Whereas urban municipalities have a central role in collecting and processing recyclable materials, developing local and regional waste reduction strategies and educating the public about waste management practices; and

Whereas the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) and its members have been leaders advocating for the Multi-Material Recycling Program and other stewardship and extended producer responsibility; and

Whereas changing global commodity markets for recycling materials have significantly impacted waste-diversion strategies:

Therefore be it resolved that SUMA advocate and work with the federal government and provincial government to:

- 1. Eliminate problematic and toxic products that pollute our environment such as micro-plastics and regulate the use of plastics and additives that are toxic or cannot be recycled;*
- 2. Reduce the use of single-use plastics; and*
- 3. Create incentives for reducing waste and the reusability of products and packaging, and to increase the reuse, recycling, and composting products and packaging."*

The Solid Waste Utility is planning several recycling related communications over the next twelve months. Education about re-use of plastics and using alternative materials can be a part of those communications and could be a good first step for the municipality to become involved in this discussion.

OPTIONS TO RECOMMENDATION

- 1) THAT the City proceed with a ban of single use plastic shopping bags beginning in 2021.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Policy is not required.

PRESENTATION

VERBAL: Administration from the Department of Engineering Services will be in attendance to provide a brief overview of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- i. April 8, 2019 – A.E. Peacock Collegiate Presentation on Single Use Plastic Bags

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Darrin Stephanson, Manager of Utilities
Reviewed by: Tracy Wittke, Assistant City Clerk
Approved by: Josh Mickleborough, Director of Engineering Services
Approved by: Jim Puffalt, City Manager
Approved by: Fraser Tolmie, Mayor

City Manager Comments

There has been excellent progress from businesses in the community already with regards to voluntarily banning or making the use of plastic bags less convenient and more expensive.

This is happening across Canada and it is believed that the use of plastic bags will continue to decline in an organic manner as compared to being imposed by Cities and the resulting issues of enforcement.

Cities can encourage a voluntary ban by continuing to create opportunities for dialogue as was done when we facilitated a meeting between the Youth Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and a local company that recently is moving to make plastic bags less convenient.

To be completed by the Clerk's Department only.

Presented to Regular Council or Executive Committee on _____.

No. _____ Resolution No. _____

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Single Use Plastic Bags - EC-2019-0188.docx
Attachments:	- April 8, 2019 A.E. Peacock Collegiate Presentation on Single Use Plastic Bags.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 22, 2019

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Tracy Wittke



Jim Puffalt



Fraser Tolmie