

Plastics Consultation

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

Environment and Climate Change Canada

351 St. Joseph Blvd., Place Vincent Massey,

Gatineau QC K1A 0H3

Dear Honourable Catherine McKenna,

The BurlingtonGreen Youth Leadership Council is a group of high school students from Burlington, Ontario who work with the local community to build a more environmentally responsible city.

We believe that the most concerning plastic pollutants harming our aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems are straws, plastic wrapping for goods, single-use water bottles, and plastic bags. By implementing policies and initiatives, the government could enact effective proactive solutions for the problems which these products create;

- 1) On a national level, charge customers for plastic bags at higher prices than reusable bags in all stores, including retail and grocery stores (plastic produce bags would also be included in this charge).
- 2) Charge for the use of single-use plastic straws at public restaurants, cafes, etc.
- 3) Provide funding for educational programs to teach the general public about the harms of plastic to our environment, ecosystems, and health - specifically the products mentioned above.
- 4) Implement a water bottle return system - similar to the alcohol bottle return system - where people are reimbursed a deposit when they return their water bottles to a specified centre. This will give people an incentive to properly recycle their water bottles and put less pressure on municipal recycling systems.
- 5) Provide a discount for people who come with and use reusable cups/bottles at fast food restaurants.
- 6) Redesign recycling and garbage bins to reduce the amount of waste which tends to easily blow out of them (by wind) and enter our waterways.
- 7) Place restrictions on the amount of plastic allowed in food and produce wrapping in grocery stores. This would greatly reduce the amount of excess plastic packaging used.
- 8) Ban the serving of plastics such as utensils, straws, and cups in schools, however, still provide reusable alternatives for students and provide straws for those who need them for accessibility reasons.
- 9) Prohibit educators from using plastic straws for STEM activities and other school projects, and alternatively provide them with reusable or biodegradable options.
- 10) Celebrate and acknowledge citizens and businesses who are acting environmentally responsible, and provide incentives for all companies to quit offering or using single use plastic products.

We call upon you, our government and leaders, to establish the national fight against plastic waste and to strive for a plastic-free Canada. You are capable of and responsible for updating and changing our laws to help Canadian consumers and suppliers make informed and sustainable decisions, as well as to ensure that Canada is leading

with environmentally conscious measures. We also call upon all district school boards to implement more education programs to teach students about alternatives for plastics in classrooms, cafeterias, and in homes. As the main influencing institutions in our country, it is your duty to lead by example and to educate the public by ensuring that you operate without using harmful plastic pollutants at your own events and meetings.

The BurlingtonGreen Youth Leadership Council hopes that you take into consideration our proposed solutions and take action on them for a greener and safer Canada. It is time that we start a nation-wide open conversation about our plastics problems and how as Canadians, we can overcome our harmful habits and grow a more environmentally sustainable home. We are looking forward to a bright future of action and education, with your guidance and support, for a cleaner Canada - and ultimately, a plastic-free Canada.

Best Regards,

Noor Toeama and Salma El Ali

On Behalf of The BurlingtonGreen Youth Leadership Council
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association

CC:

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