

**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Waste Watch Ottawa, Ecology Ottawa, Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES), Glebe Community Association Task Force on Single-Use Plastics*

**"City of Ottawa, stop promoting plastics in the green bin!"  
urges coalition of Ottawa community associations and environmental groups**

**Ottawa, April 15, 2019**

While the Federal and Provincial Governments are developing a Canada-wide strategy on zero plastic waste, and the Government of Ontario is consulting on waste and litter reduction in the Province, including plastics, the City of Ottawa is encouraging plastic bag use in its green waste stream. "This is frankly embarrassing," says Brian Tansey of Waste Watch Ottawa.

Some city councillors and citizens are questioning the decision made in the last term of council to allow plastic bags in the green bin program. On Tuesday, April 16, the City of Ottawa's Standing Committee on Environmental Protection, Water and Waste Management (EPWWM) will debate and vote on a motion to "refrain from the introduction of single-use plastic bags into the green bin until such time that research into the effect of introducing single-use plastic bags to the green bin have been presented and fully considered by the Standing Committee on Environmental Protection, Water and Waste Management." The motion was tabled in February by Councillor Shawn Menard, Vice-Chair of EPWWM.

But the City of Ottawa is poised to endorse the use of plastic bags to collect household organics and to allow dog waste in the green bin, and it is planning to implement these changes starting in July, unless the motion to delay is adopted by EPWWM and subsequently by Council. Menard stated "The city made this decision last term with insufficient research and analysis into the overall effects of such a move. As jurisdictions throughout Canada and the world move to reduce or eliminate their reliance on single-use plastics, introducing these bags into our Green Bin program is a step backwards for the City of Ottawa."

Furthermore moving ahead with the 2018 decision could cause problems as the City develops its new waste plan. "No decision of this magnitude should be made until completion of the new Solid Waste Master Plan, for which a consultation and development process will be launched in May or June, taking 18 months to two years," says Jennifer Humphries, co-chair of the Glebe Community Association's Environment Committee, member of the Task Force on Single-Use Plastic, and CAFES representative. "Once a new practice like this begins, it will be challenging to discontinue, due to residents' confusion and even disgruntlement. Yet the City's Solid Waste Master Plan may put an end to the practice as early as 2021."

Robb Barnes, Executive Director, Ecology Ottawa adds "Ecology Ottawa is supported by tens of thousands of Ottawans from every corner of the city. Our supporters are overwhelmingly concerned about plastic pollution and long-term impacts on ecosystem health. We think any municipal policy that allows for greater plastic use is a step in the wrong direction, especially as the city draws up an entirely new Waste Master Plan."

Of concern are the tiny plastic pieces that would remain in the compost after shredding. Microplastics are harmful to, and nearly impossible to remove from, the environment. "Adding plastic bags to the green bin will degrade the quality of the compost produced at the Renewi plant and significantly restrict its use," said Meg Sears, a member of Waste Watch Ottawa and Chair of Prevent Cancer Now. The plastic which will remain in the compost may also have the potential to harm humans. There is emerging science suggesting that chemicals in plastics may pose life-

long consequences including cancers, neurodevelopmental problems, metabolic conditions and reproductive difficulties.

The city is assuming that the reason green bin usage is low (just over 50%) is that citizens find dealing with the contents unpleasant. "No evidence has been presented that the so-called "yick/yuk" factor is the real issue," says Tansey. "And no evidence has been presented that the addition of plastic bags would improve participation in the green bin program. Public education is known to be the key, but Ottawa spends a third of what other cities do to inform and educate citizens."

Should the Committee and City Council reverse the decision of March 2018 to allow plastic bags, no financial or contractual consequences are expected. Refraining from implementing the decision and not promoting the use of plastic bags is not anticipated to have a negative effect on Renewi (Orgaworld's parent company), the compost facility operator. Any investment that Renewi might have made to improve shredding and screening, and that the City has effectively paid for as part of the revised contract, would be an investment that might help improve the quality of the compost that is currently produced.

Members of Waste Watch Ottawa, Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (over 50 associations across the city) and Glebe Community Association Task Force on Single-Use Plastics will attend April 16 meeting of EPWWM to express their concerns about permitting plastic bags in green bins and to support the motion to delay their introduction. They are calling for the city of Ottawa to press "pause" on this important decision.

They will also support a motion expected to be tabled at the April 16 meeting declaring a climate emergency in Ottawa. Humphries adds. "The City should be moving aggressively to reduce its carbon footprint and prevent environmental degradation in response to climate change and other threats to land, water and air, not doing the opposite by promoting single-use plastics."

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**Link to Motion under NOTICES OF MOTIONS (FOR CONSIDERATION AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING)**  
<http://app05.ottawa.ca/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?metid=7704&doctype=SUMMARY>

