

**REPORT TO:** Mayor James M. Diodati  
and Members of Municipal Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Recreation & Culture

**SUBJECT:** **R&C-2019-05**  
**Elimination of Plastic Straws and Stir Sticks in City Facilities**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the City of Niagara Falls eliminate the use and distribution of plastic straws and plastic stir sticks in all City owned facilities and at City events to complement the existing plastic beverage bottle ban.
2. That staff develop and recommend an implementation plan with input from stakeholders.
3. That staff create and implement an educational component to support the ban and raise awareness regarding reduction of all single use plastics.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Single use plastics are a major source of litter and pollution in communities and waterways around the globe. In 2009, the City of Niagara Falls was a leader in taking action when City Council supported and implemented a plastic beverage bottle ban for all City facilities and events. Plastic straws are creating significant environmental issues worldwide and many communities and businesses are taking the necessary steps to reduce and eliminate their use. Eliminating the use of plastic straws and plastic stir sticks in all City owned facilities is a logical next step to support the original plastic beverage bottle ban and to continue to reduce the use of single use plastics in Niagara Falls. The addition of an educational component to support the ban and raise awareness regarding the reduction of all single use plastics is recommended.

## **BACKGROUND**

Single use plastics, or disposable plastics are items that are used once before they are thrown away or recycled. These items are things like some plastic bags, straws, coffee stir sticks, takeout food containers, water bottles, utensils, and most food packaging. Many of these plastics are not recycled for a variety of reasons and are ending up in our oceans.

Most sources estimate that the average person uses approximately 1.6 straws per day. Using this estimate, it would be equivalent to 58,736,000 straws used daily in Canada and almost 150,000 used daily in Niagara Falls alone.

Plastic straws are not accepted in Niagara Region's recycling program and should be thrown in the garbage. Unfortunately, the Region still receives plastic straws in the recycling program. Due to their small size, plastic straws fall through the sorting screens and contaminate other streams of recyclable materials. This contamination can reduce the productivity of the recycling facility with mechanical jams; as well as decrease the efficiency of the sorting equipment. Plastic straw contamination of the recyclable commodities can lower the revenue received by the Region for accepted materials.

More and more cities and countries worldwide are moving towards establishing by-laws to ban single use plastic bottles, bags, and straws. Recently, several major companies have pledged to eliminate plastic straws which have led to considerable media coverage.

Locally, the City of St. Catharines at its January 14, 2019, Council Meeting banned the sale and use of plastic straws and stir sticks at City facilities. In addition, Brock University and Niagara College are investigating alternatives to plastic straws.

In 2009, with the support and recommendations of the Park in the City Committee and the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee, the City of Niagara Falls implemented a ban on the sale of water in plastic bottles at city facilities. Recently, both Committees have reiterated their support for the elimination of single use plastics in city facilities.

On Wednesday, September 12, 2018, and reconfirmed by newly appointed Committee on Wednesday, March 27, 2019, the Park in the City Committee made the following motion:

**IT WAS MOVED BY** Michal Lukac, second by Frank Fohr, that the Park in the City Committee supports a ban of plastic straws and stir sticks at all City facilities. The committee encourages that staff implement an educational component to compliment the ban.

Motion Carried

On Wednesday, March 6, 2019 the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee made the following motions:

**IT WAS MOVED BY** Jade Bilodeau, seconded by Salony Sharma, that the Niagara Falls Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee supports a ban of plastic straws and stir sticks at all City facilities. Further, THAT the committee work in partnership with staff to create and implement an educational component to compliment the ban and begin to look forward regarding the reduction or

elimination of other single use plastics at City Facilities including items such as plastic cutlery and bags.

Motion Carried

**IT WAS MOVED BY** Vanessa George, seconded by Ann Sony, that the Niagara Falls Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee reach out to the District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board, French Catholic School Board, and French School Board to recommend the implementation of environmental initiatives to greatly reduce or ban the use of single use plastics at all schools.

Motion Carried

### **ANALYSIS/RATIONALE**

Single use plastics are creating a significant environmental impact. The City of Niagara Falls led the way locally with the ban of plastic beverage bottles a decade ago. The City can further contribute to reducing the use of plastics by adding plastic straws and plastic stir sticks to this ban. An educational component is important to ensure that stakeholders and individuals understand the reasons behind the ban.

Plastic straws can be replaced with compostable straws made out of paper, hay, or other compostable materials. Consumers can also choose to forego the straw or bring their own reusable straw made of stainless steel, glass, bamboo etc. Plastic stir sticks can be replaced with wooden stir sticks, reusable spoons, or customers can choose to forego the use of a stir stick.

The development of an educational campaign will help to ensure that the reasons for the plastic bottle ban and straw/stir stick ban are understood. All City departments should receive the information to ensure that the departments lead by example by ensuring that items such as bottled water, plastic cutlery, polystyrene plates and cups, and other single use plastics are not used at any meetings, events, or social gatherings. The campaign will encourage individuals to think about their plastic use at all times. Educated individuals will help support the elimination of single use plastics by demanding alternatives.

Staff will meet with the stakeholders at Oakes Park, Ker Park, EE Mitchelson Park, Kalar Sports Park, Gale Centre, and the MacBain Community Centre to discuss and develop an implementation plan.

### **FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

User groups will be consulted to determine if any further appropriate action is needed to take place in order to support their existing concession operations with the transition from plastic to non-plastic supplies.

If requested, the Park in the City Committee is able to supply user groups operating concessions within City facilities a starter kit of paper straws and wooden stir sticks at the start of the transition period. Non-plastic supplies of stir sticks and straws are easily accessible to purchase through local retail outlets. For example a box of 1500 paper straws can be purchased for approximately \$50.00.

Other supplies affected by the ban, including tetra packs with plastic straws may be replaced with canned juice containers purchased from local retailers.

### **CITY'S STRATEGIC COMMITMENT**

As per the City's Strategic Priority, Healthy and Safe Community, we are committed to supporting a high quality of life and contributing to the well-being of residents and visitors by ensuring a healthy, safe, and secure community. Continued reduction of the use of single use plastics will lead to less litter in our community and waterways and will contribute positively to the environment.

**Recommended by:**

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Kathy Moldenhauer, Director of Recreation and Culture

**Respectfully submitted:**

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Ken Todd, Chief Administrative Officer