SWANA COMMUNICATIONS EXCELLENCE AWARD

City of Toronto, Canada
April 2011 Submission
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Intent</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research/Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Program need</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Research</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Research goals</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Highlights of this research revealed:</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Target audiences</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Materials in use prior to the Program</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Strategic planning</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Goals</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Objectives</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anticipated obstacles for meeting goals:</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anticipated opportunities for meeting goals:</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation/Execution</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Timeline</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Communication tools/Timelines</em></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Budget</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Partnerships/Collaborations</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How Stakeholder partnerships/collaboration helped meet program goals</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How planning elements were successfully accomplished:</em></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Creativity</em></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results/Evaluation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Success measurements</em></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Examples of Retailers citing % plastic bag reductions at their stores</em></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Examples of retailers donating proceeds from mandatory fees</em></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Companies exceed bylaw policy to ban plastic shopping bags at their stores</em></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Thoughts for future improvement</em></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Replicable in other communities</em></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix – Selected Communication samples</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Toronto, with a population of 2.6 million residents, took a bold step in 2009 to implement a new bylaw targeting the reduction of unnecessary in-store packaging, specifically single-use disposable plastic retail shopping bags provided to customers at the point-of-cash to carry out their purchases. Recognized as a world leader on waste diversion efforts, the City chose this time to emphasize the first of the 3Rs – Reduce. Less is best, especially when it comes to volumes of plastic shopping bags.

The City's comprehensive communications campaign targeted both affected businesses and the public with effective key messages stating that there is no need to fill up valuable landfill space with plastic bags when you have the power to reduce their usage and the readily available option of reusable alternatives.

Legislation combined with communications provided the ideal forum for effective outreach, with the appropriate public education tools and communication of 'why does this matter?' and 'what's in it for me and the world I live in?'

STATEMENT OF INTENT

At a December 2, 2008, meeting, Toronto City Council took bold action to reduce retail in-store packaging and ultimately ensure that the retail packaging that is used is recyclable in the City’s Blue Bin recycling program. The first packaging reduction initiative implemented, which is the subject of this award submission, focused on reducing the volume of plastic retail shopping bags. Council approved policies that retailers must charge a minimum of five cents for each single-use plastic retail shopping bag taken by a customer or offer customers a free non-plastic alternative by June 1, 2009. By June 1, 2010, all shopping bags had to be compatible with the City’s recycling system.

The City bylaw required retailers to implement a range of options so customers could make positive environmental choices and reduce their use of single-use disposable plastic retail shopping bags by taking advantage of convenient reusable alternatives.

A multi-level communications campaign informed target audiences – affected retailers and the general public, their customers – by using a comprehensive range of tools and media to generate awareness, understanding and support of this new bylaw, prompt compliance and participation in new required behaviours, and promote the resulting environmental and economic benefits.

RESEARCH/PLANNING

Toronto, Canada's largest city has a diverse population of 2.6 million people. These demographics present unique challenges when communicating important waste diversion initiatives. Our communications campaigns address these elements by ensuring our outreach is multi-lingual (according to Stats Canada 2006 census, almost 20% do not speak English), speaks to the cultural diversity (more than one million are new immigrants) and reaches a mix of residential housing (50% of residents live in high rise buildings).
PROGRAM NEED

In April 2007, the City of Toronto purchased its own landfill. However, securing long term disposal capacity was no excuse to slacken its waste diversion efforts. If anything, it was an added incentive to further the lifespan of the landfill.

Following the hierarchy of the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), the core principles of the plastic retail shopping bag bylaw emphasized source reduction, a key component of Toronto’s overall goal to achieve 70% waste diversion. Prior to the new bylaw, 2,800 metric tonnes of plastic bags annually went to landfill, occupying 6,900 cubic metres of valuable landfill space per year. Reduction of in-store plastic shopping bags would generate a cost-saving because the material would never enter the City's waste management system and it would also decrease street litter.

![Plastic bags](image)

Toronto chose to learn from studying other countries' best practices who had introduced packaging reduction policies. City staff were confident that convenient, reusable, alternative packaging options were available. Voluntary contributions to minimize the use of these types of disposable plastic bags was evident, however it was not significant enough to produce desired results. There was need for a bylaw and accompanying multi-faceted communications campaign.

Plastic bags by the numbers (Reference source – Toronto Star newspaper library):

- **460 million** plastic shopping bags used in Toronto each year
- **3.5 billion** plastic shopping bags used in Ontario each year
- **20 minutes** – average time each bag is used
- **400 years** – time it takes for a plastic shopping bag to break down

RESEARCH

The City researched other jurisdictions and conducted public-attitude studies to determine what materials and behaviours currently existed regarding the use or rejection of single-use disposable plastic retail shopping bags. Both by observance and as expressed by research participants, many residents were already in the habit of bringing their own reusable bags with them when shopping or using store-provided cardboard boxes to carry out their purchases.

RESEARCH GOALS

- Seek general information about waste management attitudes and behaviours, and use of disposable and reusable container products.
- Gauge support for proposals such as a container 'fee', banning the use of certain container products, a deposit return program, and a leave-behind program.
In May, and again in October 2008, the City contracted a professional research firm (Ipsos Reid) to conduct qualitative research (six focus groups) with Toronto residents who used disposable containers (e.g. plastic shopping bags, plastic water bottles, takeout food containers), recruiting participants from a mix of gender, ages, ethnicity, incomes, education and type of home.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS RESEARCH REVEALED:**

- Packaging is a primary problem associated with excessive waste and opportunity existed to move on issues associated with waste reduction - many felt they could do more to decrease their daily waste to protect the environment.
- Some participants took steps daily to reduce the amount of disposable packaging used; in particular, replacing disposable plastic bags with reusable canvas bags.
- The timing was right to promote initiatives designed to increase use of alternative reusable packaging/container options.
- The City's proposed recommendations motivated participants to agree to use more reusable products, particularly reusable bags.
- There was positive reaction to the City’s proposal to charge consumers for disposable packaging.
- The positioning of the fee was important. Participants questioned if the fee represented the actual cost to businesses to supply plastic shopping bags or whether they would make a profit from it.
- Ultimately, most agreed a fee was needed to motivate their behaviour change.

Additionally, the City contracted Kelleher Environmental to carry out research on the financial tools and other policies used by other jurisdictions to tackle packaging. The research identified numerous examples of plastic bag bans, levies and mandatory or voluntary recycling initiatives. Levies of 25 cents per bag were considered the most effective method of reducing volumes of plastic bags generated at source.

City-hosted public consultation sessions also revealed public interest in packaging reduction.

In September 2008, to better inform its strategic approach to providing the public with packaging options, **staff hosted a Packaging Waste Reduction Forum** involving an international roster of speakers to:

- explore packaging reduction options available to Toronto;
- explore voluntary, business-led programs that achieved waste reduction;
- inform the content of the In-Store Packaging staff report, which would take into account the differentiation between in-store and factory packaging;
- hear/learn from experiences of jurisdictions that had introduced packaging reduction initiatives (e.g. Ottawa, ON; London, ON; Seattle, Washington; and Ireland);
- respond to residents’ comments gathered during public consultations i.e. that packaging reduction is an issue the City needs to focus on;
- further Toronto's primary goal of 70% waste reduction from landfill, to preserve the disposal lifespan of the City's Green Lane Landfill, a $220 million dollar investment; and
- encourage dialogue and information exchange between stakeholders.

**Registered participants included:**

- Major multinational corporations (i.e., Wal-Mart, McDonalds);
- National Brands (i.e., Canadian Tire, Tim Horton’s, Maple Leaf Foods);
- Industry and retail associations (e.g., Canadian Council of Grocery Distributers (CCGD), Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA), Canadian Restaurant and Foodservice Association (CRFA));
• Environmental non-governmental organizations and citizen advisory bodies;
• Recycling Council of Ontario;
• Sierra Club;
• 3Rs Working Group (Toronto citizen advisory body).

Armed with research results and public/industry consultations, staff prepared to introduce policies and a bylaw. Accordingly, in November 2008, staff presented the In-Store Packaging Report to its standing committee (Public Works and Infrastructure). Approved by this Committee, the report's recommendations were ultimately debated and approved by Toronto City Council in December, 2008.

**TARGET AUDIENCES**

**Primary:**
• Toronto businesses that provide customers with plastic shopping bags
• The public, including residents and visitors/tourists purchasing items in Toronto

**Secondary:**
• Media
• Politicians at all levels of government
• General business community

**MATERIALS IN USE PRIOR TO THE PROGRAM**

While the City had a host of effectively communicated waste diversion programs, it did not previously have a policy/bylaw to reduce unnecessary in-store packaging. On a voluntary basis, several grocery/retail chains were offering reusable bags, boxes and toters for purchase; providing free bag alternatives such as cardboard boxes or paper bags; and several discount chains had long been charging a nominal fee per plastic shopping bag – an established policy accepted by the public. The public was also volunteering to bring reusable carry-out options with them when shopping.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

When planning its strategy, City staff explored the powers of the City of Toronto Act with respect to regulating packaging, keeping in mind its commitment to work with other levels of government, peer municipalities and industry/retail/stewards on the best ways to drive source reduction of waste. Toronto realized business models may have to change and that the City could not rely solely on business interests to develop programs to reduce unnecessary packaging.

Communications staff were involved in all levels of consultation and investigation from the outset, working closely with Operations staff to ensure the required communications issues management and strategic planning were incorporated into the communications plan and resulting promotion and public education. Using past experience and expertise, Communications staff provided advice and guidance to Operations, taking responsibility for communicating the appropriate tone, timing, key messages, availability of tools and environmental benefits regarding the bylaw.
As part of the strategy, Toronto planned to add plastic retail shopping bags to its residential Blue Bin recycling program in December, 2008. This initiative would allow those who chose to pay the bag fee with a means to recycle their plastic shopping bags. It was also integral to the bylaw's implementation date of June 1, 2010 when retailers were prohibited from providing bags that were incompatible with Toronto’s recycling program (i.e. bags could not be biodegradable or compostable plastic, or plastic with metal detailing or grommets, rope or hard plastic handles).

As part of the City's strategic planning, staff studied various options other than plastic shopping bags and determined that biodegradable packaging was not the solution. This medium poses too many problems for Toronto's processing and sorting systems, whether that be processing of organics or recyclables, and must be classified as garbage requiring landfill disposal.

**GOALS**

The City of Toronto has a goal to divert 70% of waste from landfill. To reduce the volume of plastic bags and encourage the use of reusable bags/bins, the City's bylaw required Toronto retailers to charge a minimum of 5 cents per plastic bag requested by the customer at checkout, as of June 1, 2009; and by June 1, 2010, any plastic bags provided for a fee to customers had to be recyclable in the City's system. These requirements were covered under the City’s Municipal Code Chapter 604, Packaging bylaw that was officially approved by Council on March 31, 2009.

**Key policy goals:**

- Drive reduction/reuse/recycle behaviour
- Increase average baseline price of product
- Not place Toronto-based businesses at competitive disadvantage
- Be consistent with City's 70% waste diversion curbside-focused service model (e.g. resident convenience, municipal efficiency, maintains funding partnerships)

**OBJECTIVES**

- Reduce unnecessary packaging to move the City closer to its 70% waste diversion goal.
- Remind Torontonians that they have the power to refuse unnecessary packaging.
- Support residents to minimize waste and pay less.
- Reduce public space litter.
- Ensure that carry-out packaging materials are recyclable in the Blue Bin program.
• Reassure the public and retailers that the City understood certain packaging has a necessary function, such as public health and safety, to keep food fresh/safe and protect purchases during transit

**Summary of Communications' strategies/tasks planned to meet goals:**

- Research
- Issues management (briefing/issue notes, key messages, questions/answers)
- Industry stakeholder consultation (including presentations to affected businesses)
- Staff reports and Councillor briefings
- Media relations (including a technical briefing to media on staff report recommendations)
- Advertising
- Direct mail to affected businesses
- Production and distribution of free mandatory signage
- Prepared articles for reprint
- Website content (all official documents and promo materials available for downloading)
- Inter-divisional collaboration (e.g. bylaw education and enforcement staff, Legal, Economic Development, and Finance staff were consulted)

**ANTICIPATED OBSTACLES FOR MEETING GOALS**

- Sensitivity to implementation of the proposed fee for use of disposable plastic shopping bags (who would charge and keep the fee – retailers or city government; dispel the notion that this was another city tax)
- Retailers may have substantial stock inventory of targeted plastic shopping bags or other types of bags non-compatible with the City’s recycling program
- Communicating effectively to Toronto’s diverse population of retailers whose first language is not English

**ANTICIPATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEETING GOALS**

- Current practices both in Toronto and abroad, along with research results indicated affected retailers and the public were willing and prepared to do more to reduce unnecessary packaging
- City of Toronto Act provided municipal government the power to regulate policy
- Industry stakeholders were willing to discuss and consult on the initiative
- Majority of political will was present to act in support
- Communications and public education budget and staff were available to effectively promote behavioural change

**IMPLEMENTATION/EXECUTION**

**TIMELINE**

The policy and accompanying bylaw was phased in to provide adequate time for retailers to prepare for and fulfill their obligations. This approach also provided time for effective communication and public education to customers (the public).

**Selected samples of Communications materials shown in Appendix**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION TOOLS/TIMELINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Media relations | **Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors news release and City backgrounder** on benefits of reducing volume of plastic shopping bags for joint City press conference – Toronto Mayor joined by heads of national grocery chains participated & exhibited reusable carry-out alternatives  
City news release & backgrounder after Council approved staff report  
City news release announcing effective date of bylaw  
Stakeholder news releases reporting on waste diversion benefits of bylaw & volume of plastic bags used  
Responded to a high volume of media calls | November 26, 2008  
December 2, 2008  
June 1, 2009  
October 9, 2009 & onward  
Ongoing, as required |
| Direct mail | **Personalized addressed letter** to affected Toronto businesses with free sign samples  
**2nd mailing** to clarify 'free alternative to plastic bag' option noted in bylaw  
**Letter** to all Canadian National Exhibition Place show managers and exhibitors advising of new bylaw & prompting compliance | May 9, 2009  
January 2010  
September 2009 |
| Public education tools for businesses & associations, the public (customers), City staff, politicians | City-produced options for free mandated in-store signage (unlimited supply available online or pick-up from civic centres & Councillors' offices)  
**Prepared articles** for Business Improvement Associations, trade associations, suppliers, retailers & Councillors  
**Monday Morning News** email alerting Toronto Public Service staff to new bag policy  
Distribution of free public education 2009/2010 Collection Calendar to all Toronto households featuring bylaw reminder, reusable options, reminder to recycle plastic bags  
**Fact Sheet** – for Councillors | May 15, 2009  
June 2009  
June 2009  
February 2009 |
| Industry stakeholder consultation | Meet to receive input from businesses/manufacturers/NGOs/citizen advisory groups  
Presentation on bylaw/policy to Business Improvement annual general meeting | Throughout winter/spring 2009  
May 2009 |
| Responding to bylaw inquiries (phone & E-mail) | **Answering questions** from affected businesses, plastic shopping bag suppliers & Councillors | Ongoing, as required |
| Collaboration with Environmental Groups | **Participated in WWF-Canada's** new website initiative to recognize individuals, companies & municipalities who are taking action to reduce plastic bags from our landfill – Toronto provided municipal pledge demonstrating action taken by City | April 2009 |
Inter-divisional collaboration

**Consulted with other City divisions** (Legal, Economic Development) on policy for bylaw, legal authority, impact on Toronto's businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All materials posted online:</strong> policies, timelines, promo material, direct mail letter, signage options, plus links to new bylaw, staff report &amp; Committee/Council decision documents Comprehensive <strong>Frequently Asked Questions/Answers</strong> posted online – updated frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Provided contracted ad agency with Advertising Strategy document **Media buy approved**

  Budget: $225K (media buy, commission, production, taxes)
  - 30-sec. **radio** ad – broad reach including Chinese language station
  - **Print ads** (1/3 pg 4-colour)
    - English & ethnic community newspapers
    - Free street & commuter newspapers
  - **Transit posters**
    - subway, bus, streetcar |

**December 2008 & ongoing**

**March 23, 2009**

**April 15, 2009**

In market mid-May to mid-June 2009 to coincide with effective date of June 1, 2009 for bylaw

---

**BUDGET**

The following chart only features communications materials with an associated cost. Other tools, as noted in above chart, contributed significantly but did not involve a cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication elements produced late 2008, during 2009 and early 2010</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research (focus groups/consultations)</td>
<td>$20,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Mail (printing of letter, envelopes, translation, postage, collation)</td>
<td>$63,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store signage (posters, stickers, postcards)</td>
<td>$17,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising (radio, print, transit posters)</td>
<td>$225,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$327,514</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATIONS**

Toronto's collaborative process began with its residents, who asked the City to address waste packaging. In public consultation sessions held in 2006 and 2007 on the City's approach to waste disposal, residents identified packaging waste as one of the key problems. During City-sponsored focus groups conducted by Ipsos Reid (professional research firm) in May and October 2008, many participants identified packaging as the primary problem associated with waste reduction.
Torontonians expressed concern about unnecessary packaging’s impact on the environment and voiced that there was greater social and environmental benefit to the City of Toronto taking action to reduce the volume of single-use disposable plastic shopping bags.

**Partnerships/collaborations included:**

- The In-Store Packaging Waste Diversion Working Group discussions
- The Packaging Waste Reduction Forum, held September 10, 2008
- Individual meetings with stakeholders
- Site visits to other municipalities

**HOW STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATION HELPED MEET PROGRAM GOALS**

Staff established a City/Industry Working Group (In-Store Packaging Waste Diversion Working Group) to examine options to source reduce 10,000 tonnes of in-store packaging in Toronto annually. The Working Group focused its work on three types of in-store disposable packaging: hot and cold drink cups, plastic bags and plastic take-out food containers. Staff consulted with this Group as well as packaging suppliers, grocery retailers and members of a long established citizen-based 3Rs Working Group.

In-store Packaging Waste Diversion Working Group meeting discussions led to the City revising its implementation of the communication methods. At first staff thought it was sufficient to supply ready-to-use art files on the website for free downloading of the mandatory signs retailers would be obliged to post at the point-of-cash. Upon hearing from the Group, the City agreed to produce hard copies of the sign options and organize a distribution mechanism – all at no charge to retailers. It also provided online download options and allowed retailers to produce their own signs if they wished and kept the content requirements minimal.

Group members emphasized the amount of lead time businesses needed to prepare for bylaw compliance. The Group had hands-on involvement with the various sign options, commenting on text and visuals and size and design layout of signage. They insisted the City provide the necessary tools and devise various methods of getting the news out to affected businesses. This confirmed the plan to do a direct mail letter personalized to targeted businesses. Group members, on behalf of the associations and companies they represented, offered to help send out City-prepared articles, news releases and signage art files to members/franchisees/staff.

**Working with other City divisions and levels of government:**

Solid Waste Management Services staff worked with appropriate City staff from Municipal Licensing and Standards, Legal Services, Toronto Public Health and Economic Development to develop text for the bylaw. Bylaw enforcement concentrated first on education, followed by an enforcement protocol of provincially-established fines. The fine for not charging a five-cent fee for a retail plastic shopping bag is $125.00. Enforcement is handled on a complaint basis, with the focus being on education and provision of signage (if that is what the retailer has failed to post). To-date, no charges have been laid.
The City of Toronto also worked cooperatively with the provincial government of Ontario, building on the Province's plastic bag reduction plan whereby retailers voluntarily agreed to reduce retail plastic shopping bag use by 50% by 2012. Toronto's goal of achieving 70% bag reduction works in concert with the provincial policy.

**HOW PLANNING ELEMENTS WERE SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED**

The City implemented the plastic bag bylaw acting on the will of the people – public consultations, focus group research, industry collaboration and partnerships, liaison with other City divisions, other levels of government and other countries. Collectively there was both a willingness, a mindset, and a need to act on this type of waste diversion. Additionally, the infrastructure existed in the form of readily-available, environmentally friendly reusable alternatives for carry-out packaging. Legal staff confirmed the City did have authority under the City of Toronto Act to implement such a bylaw.

Listening to feedback from the Legal Department, the City was careful not to position the fee that retailers were mandated to charge to customers requesting plastic shopping bags, as a 'tax', nor would the money be kept by government. Fees collected would remain with the businesses, which were encouraged by the City to reinvest the revenue from the sale of plastic retail shopping bags into community or environmental initiatives, and to let their customers know what they were doing with the funds.

The City dealt with the potential obstacle of retailers possibly being burdened with non-compatible carry-out bag inventory by phasing in mandatory deadlines. This allowed for an education period, time for retailers to provide their own reusable alternatives either for free or purchase, use up bag stock, switch to bags permitted by the plastic bag bylaw, adjust their buying patterns to only purchase bags that were recyclable in the City's system, and place mandatory signage, as well as time for the City to effectively communicate the new policy to customers and businesses.

Recognizing the diversity of Toronto's population, in particular businesses who cater to and are operated by people whose first language is not English, the direct mail pieces all contained summaries in translation and promoted free access to information available in other languages via the City's 311 Call Centre and its liaison with the City's Multi-lingual Helpline.

Staff laid the groundwork within the political realm by hosting numerous briefings, making presentations and writing reports to Standing Committees and City Council to ensure there was understanding and support for this bylaw.

**CREATIVITY**

Creativity takes courage; to act on creating legislation to achieve important outcomes that weren't being accomplished through existing voluntary measures. Staff chose to position the City as a leader, to set rules to achieve sustainable results. The City was strategic enough to learn from other municipalities and countries' best practices. Staff kept the policy simple in the design of the mandated signage, worked with industry to find creative compromises everyone could support and chose not to be overly restrictive by asking for a ban on all plastic bags.
Toronto did not interfere and overstep by including plastic packaging required to ensure health and safety standards. It only targeted unnecessary in-store packaging provided at point-of-sale, nor did it propose prohibitively expensive fees.

The City's creative collaboration with its contracted ad agency, Agency59, resulted in clear, simple, yet innovative advertisements that stated a strong call-to-action. A strategic media buy gave exposure to a striking image of a frog, not sitting on a lily pad as it should, but on a floating plastic bag. The headline and visual spoke volumes "Plastic bags end up in places they don't belong."

**RESULTS/EVALUATION**

The decision to involve affected businesses in the planning process from the outset paid off for everyone. There was significant uptake on the use of City-produced mandated signage as seen by touring a wide range of stores. Those major retail chains, who early-on indicated a willingness to participate, took it a step further to set the policy in motion prior to City Council approval. Many enhanced their environmental commitment via creative advertising, signage, media relations, messaging in store flyers, marketing reusable alternatives, thanking customers for providing their own reusable containers/bags from home and extended the bylaw policies far beyond Toronto's city boundaries throughout Ontario and across Canada.

The vast majority of consumers were not unhappy with the new bylaw and the retailers' response, finding little, if any, need to file complaints with the City's enforcement staff. For quite some time, many were accustomed to bringing reusable containers/bags to carry out their purchases, proudly refusing to use plastic shopping bags regardless of whether they were offered free or at a charge. Now the City was solidly and officially supporting their eco-minded behaviour and it made them happy to know more people would follow suit and retailers would be held accountable. Such policies build strong positive community relations for all parties. Reaction to and support of the bylaw is another success measure of the comprehensive and strategic way the City communicated the program.

**SUCCESS MEASUREMENTS**

Solid Waste Management Services' month-long waste composition and participation audit of single-family homes conducted in June 2010 indicated a reduction of 56% in plastic retail shopping bag generation and a 68% reduction in plastic retail shopping bags found in the garbage when compared with waste audits done in 2008 (prior to implementing the bylaw). Finding less plastic bags in the garbage could be attributed to the reduced use of such bags or that these bags were now being recycled. Both statistical findings are environmentally beneficial, contribute to waste diversion from landfill and ultimately speak to the success of the communications program implemented to introduce the plastic shopping bag bylaw. See the following two bar graphs.
### Carry-out plastic bags generated per single-family household

**Year** | **Kg** | **Change**
--- | --- | ---
2008 | 10.81 kg (kg/hhld per yr) | A 50% reduction from 2008
Jun-10 | 5.41 kg (kg/hhld per yr) | A 56% reduction from 2008
Dec-10 | 4.81 kg (kg/hhld per yr) | A 56% reduction from 2008

### Carry-out plastic bags found in garbage (instead of recycling)

**Year** | **Kg** | **Change**
--- | --- | ---
2008 | 5.85 kg (kg/hhld per yr) | 6.8% reduction from 2008
Jun-10 | 1.89 kg (kg/hhld per yr) |
Dec-10 | 1.89 kg (kg/hhld per yr) |
EXAMPLES OF RETAILERS CITING % PLASTIC BAG REDUCTIONS AT THEIR STORES

Given the City's close collaboration with major grocery chains, all of whom participated in the November 26, 2008 joint press conference announcing the bylaw, these stores helped cross-promote Toronto's new policies in the following news releases and statements declaring their success measures. These accomplishments also speak to the effectiveness and success of the City's communications strategy.

- Metro (Metro Ontario Inc.), in June 29, 2009 press release, stated: “‘Four weeks after introducing a $0.05 charge for single-use grocery bags, Metro grocery stores across Quebec and Ontario are reporting that 70% fewer bags have been distributed in store, when compared to the monthly average.”


- Loblaw Companies, which began charging $0.05 per bag in January 2009, six months ahead of their obligation to do so under Municipal Code Chapter 604, stated: “stores involved in the Company’s plastic bag reduction pilot program in the City of Toronto resulted in distributing approximately 75% fewer plastic shopping bags per $1000 in sales. The data reveals that a nominal charge for bag strategy is the key driver behind significantly reducing plastic shopping bag use.”

http://micro.newswire.ca/release.cgi?rkey=1704203007&view=62151-0&Start=20&htm=0

- In less than six months, Sobeys, Foodland and IGA customers proved they can be the difference for a greener Ontario and have reduced single use plastic bag consumption in our stores by 72% – exceeding Provincial plastic bag reduction target of 50%.


EXAMPLES OF RETAILERS DONATING PROCEEDS FROM MANDATORY FEES

- Loblaw Companies - World Wildlife Fund
  "For the next three years, Loblaw will provide a corporate donation and partial proceeds from the charge on plastic shopping bags from corporate stores totalling $3 million to WWF-Canada."

http://micro.newswire.ca/release.cgi?rkey=1704203007&view=62151-0&Start=20&htm=0

- Home Depot Canada - The Home Depot Canada Foundation
  "The Home Depot Canada Foundation is the recipient of net proceeds through the sale of plastic shopping bags from The Home Depot Canada stores. These proceeds will help fund sustainable housing and community projects across Canada as part of our pledge to make a difference in our communities."


- Sobeys - Earth Day Canada Community Environment Fund
  "This fund is a grass roots grant program aimed at creating opportunities to educate and inspire action in communities across Ontario. The fund which is modeled after a similar program operated by Sobeys Quebec with Earth Day Canada's sister organization, Jour de la Terre, will provide local organizations with grants of up to $20,000 to support environmental initiatives."

• **Shoppers Drug Mart - Shoppers Drug Mart Women’s Cancer Research Program at Princess Margaret Hospital**
  
  A portion of the proceeds raised from the mandatory fee will be donated to the Shoppers Drug Mart Women’s Cancer Research Program at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto.
  

**COMPANIES EXCEED BYLAW POLICY TO BAN PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS AT THEIR STORES**

• **Whole Foods** - Banned plastic grocery bags.
  

• **IKEA** – As of July 1, 2009 plastic bags will be a thing of the past at all Canadian IKEA stores. In a recent survey, an overwhelming number of IKEA customers said they support move to bag-the-bag, so we did. Thanks for that (and remember to bring your own bags next time you shop).
  

**THOUGHTS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENT**

Overall, it appears that affected retailers are in compliance with the bylaw. The number of people bringing reusable carry-out alternatives when shopping grows daily. There could be merit in following up more closely with staff in education/enforcement to solicit feedback on the status of the education phase and probe further into why no charges have been laid to-date. Given the extent of public and commercial support for the bylaw, it appears the desired behavioural change was accomplished and continues to be sustained over time. The practice of using a reusable alternative to a plastic shopping bag for carrying home purchases is now second nature and a well-ingrained habit for most people. The City continues to promote the 3Rs, in particular reduction.

**REPLICABLE IN OTHER COMMUNITIES**

Yes, implementing policies to reduce unnecessary packaging is doable in other communities. Other cities have established similar packaging waste reduction bylaws to Toronto's both before and after Toronto did. Many more have followed in the City's footsteps, some are even attempting to establish outright bans of plastic shopping bags.

Recognized as a leader in waste diversion globally, Toronto is under the spotlight. The City's forward-thinking, innovative waste reduction initiatives are often studied and replicated. Staff regularly host foreign visitors, speak at international conferences, provide tours, share ideas, reports, findings and best practices acknowledging the benefits Toronto has gained over the years by being on the receiving end of such exchanges.
APPENDIX – SELECTED COMMUNICATION SAMPLES

City of Toronto English print ad (also created poster style ad for transit shelter signage)

Chinese ad (also done in Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Tamil)

AGENCY59

CLIENT: City of Toronto DATE: April 28, 2009 PROJECT: Plastic Bag Charge DOCKET #: TW-1183

APPROVED RADIO COPY

Plastic bags, no matter what we try and do with them, seem to end up where they just don’t belong – like our landfills, waterways, and even our trees.

That’s why, as of June 1st, Toronto retailers will charge a minimum of 5¢ for every plastic shopping bag provided at checkout.

Try using alternatives like reusable bags, bins or boxes to avoid the charge and help keep plastic out of our environment.

To find out more, visit toronto.ca/SeemBag or call 416-338-2010.
Selected media coverage

**Globe and Mail** (English language national newspaper) – November 12, 2008:
"Students call for ban on plastic bags" – "When we're adults, we want a clean world, we don't want it polluted all over with plastic bags," said Grade six student.

**Toronto Star** (English language national newspaper) – November 26, 2008:
"City plans five-cent plastic bag fee" – Toronto and grocers work out proposal to curb throwaways

**Toronto Star** editorial – November 27, 2008:
"Putting a price on plastic bags" – In a testament to what well-intentioned people can accomplish, major grocery store chains and Toronto city officials have arrived at a reasonable and effective way to discourage use of plastic bags… there are plenty of alternatives… Plastic shopping bags will be recyclable in Toronto starting next month, but the greenest way to handle them – by far – is to avoid taking them home in the first place."

**Toronto Star** – Environment page – December 7, 2008:
"Plastic bags and the price point for behavioural change"

**Canoe network SUN MEDIA** – November 27, 2008:
"I think it's a very good thing. I think there are too many bags going into landfills. I have always carried my own shopping bag, just so I don't have to get those," said resident outside Sobey's grocery store.

**Metroland** - community newspaper – January 16, 2009:
"Plastic bag fee will help to change grocery store behavior" – It's good for the environment, sets a fine example for children, means less is spent on plastic grocery bags and keeps our landfills free of waste.

**City TV** – online January 2, 2011:
"Plastic bag Programs Paying Off"

**Toronto Star** – online blog comments – January 4, 2011
"Prior to the 5-cent bag fee I used to watch and cringe as store clerks would place one chocolate bar in a plastic bag and hand it to the customer. The customer would exit the store, remove the one chocolate bar from the bag and drop the bag on the ground. After eating the chocolate bar, they would then drop the wrapper on the ground. We cannot stop these ignorant people from using our city as their personal garbage pail, but we have stopped them from littering with these useless plastic bags."

Reducing the volume of plastic shopping bags makes 'cents'

To reduce the volume of plastic shopping bags and encourage the use of reusable bags/bin, as of June 1, 2009, the City of Toronto requires stores to charge a minimum of 5-cents per plastic shopping bag requested by the customer at checkout. This charge will appear on the receipt (if one is issued). Certain grocery stores, such as Loblaws, No Frills and Price Chopper already charge for requested plastic carry-out bags and have realized a major reduction of these bags distributed within their stores. Reducing is always preferable to reusing or recycling.

Stores supplying such plastic shopping bags must post prominent signage announcing this City policy and allow customers to use the reusable container of their choice. The fee charged is not provided to the City, but remains with the retailer, who may in turn apply the money towards an environmentally-friendly investment involving reusable alternatives to plastic shopping bags.

This new policy does not apply to paper shopping bags or to plastic bags used by shoppers in a store to package bulk items like fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains, candy or hardware items like nails; or bags used to contain frozen food items or flowers and potted plants; bags protecting baked goods; newspaper bags; or bags provided by pharmacists to carry prescription drugs.

Currently, plastic shopping bags are recyclable in Toronto, so please recycle these bags when no longer usable. To recycle plastic shopping bags, remove receipts, stuff all bags into one tidy plastic bag and put them in the Blue Box recycling collection container. Effective June 1, 2010, all plastic shopping bags offered by retailers must be recyclable in the City's recycling program.

For more information see [www.toronto.ca/5centbag](http://www.toronto.ca/5centbag)

Prepared article distributed to Councillors, business associations, retailers
City of Toronto SWANA Communications Excellence Award 2011

City signage (not size as): Poster  Postcard  Sticker

City of Toronto's Solid Waste Management: Windows Explorer provided by City of Toronto

Living in Toronto: Doing Business

Plastic shopping bags cost a minimum of 6 cents as of June 1, 2009

The City of Toronto has a goal of diverting 70% of waste from landfill. To reduce the volume of plastic bags and encourage the use of reusable bags, retailers in the City of Toronto will be required to charge a minimum of 5 cents per plastic bag requested by the customer at checkout. As of June 1, 2009, the requirements are covered under the City’s new Municipal Code Chapter 954. Packaging bylaw approved by Toronto City Council at its March 31, 2009 meeting.

You will need the free Adobe Acrobat reader to view PDF file.

- City of Toronto letter to Toronto retailers about new bylaw for plastic shopping bags
- This letter is also available in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Italian, Hindi, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese
- How the June 1, 2009 part of the bylaw affects Toronto retailers
- Section 6 of Chapter 605: section of the bylaw effective June 1, 2009

City of Toronto SWANA Communications Excellence Award 2011
September page - 2009 single-family collection calendar

Stop waste before it happens

Avoid disposables, try reusables:

- Use reusable bags: stock up on reusable bags and keep extras handy in your car, in your purse or briefcase, at the office for lunch hour or, even better, at home or in your school locker.
- Say “no” to plastic bags: avoid the minimum 5-cent charge per plastic shopping bag. Make a habit of saying “no plastic please” before the cashier bags up your purchase.
- Make plastic bags work extra hard. Fill as many items as you can into each plastic grocery bag (and try not to double bag). Some fruits and vegetables may need a plastic produce bag (e.g., bananas, egg yolks).
- Recycle unwanted plastic bags: plastic grocery and food bags without drawstrings, metal detailing or plastic handles can now go in your Blue Bin. Remove receipts and put bags in one bag and tie bags closed.

...and other reusable items such as razors, mops, dusters, food containers and many more.

February feature page in 2010 single-family collection calendar
City of Toronto SWANA Communications Excellence Award 2011

City's background - Council approves packaging reductions

December 2, 2011

City Council takes action to reduce packaging

Today, at its December 2, 2011 meeting, Toronto City Council took bold action to reduce waste in store packaging and addressed an urban issue that the mainland urban areas are grappling with in the City’s Small Package system.

Policies approved by Council include a requirement that, by June 1, 2012, retailers charge five cents for each single-use plastic retail shopping bag taken by a customer or provide it free of charge. In addition, all plastic bags must be compatible with the City’s recycling program by January 1, 2013. Council also voted to ban the sale of bath towels at City One Controls and to ban plastic take-out food containers that are not compatible with the City’s Small Package system by May 31, 2012.

Following the precedent of the MTU (Recycle, Reduce, Reuse), these policies address issues of reduction, a key component of Toronto’s overall goal to achieve 70% waste diversion. Less material means less disposal and the life of Toronto’s sustainable landfill will be extended.

I’m very proud that Toronto is leading the way. It’s a right thing to do. Needlessly diverse bags are a problem and reductions and solutions will reduce their dependence on disposable products,” said Mayor Miller. “Reducing packaging options is already very popular and well received. Torontoans will continue to embrace alternatives that make the right thing for the environment and the community.”

Starting in June, 2011, and continuing over the next two years, retailers will be required to implement a range of options to enable customers to make positive environmental choices and reduce their use of all single-use packaging (e.g. getting an aluminum can; providing a stainless steel bottle; making a bag choice; recycling a plastic bag). This will include recycling infrastructure upgrades, recycling point developments and other initiatives that are aimed at reducing waste.

(More information on specific policies can be found in the attached background)

Toronto is Canada’s largest city and a world-class government, and has a diverse population of about 2.6 million people. It is the economic engine of Canada and one of the most diverse cities in North America. It is one of the most liveable cities in the world. Toronto is the government is dedicated to responsibility, efficiency, and quality for all its residents.

70 -

Radio contact: Stuart Glazer. Copy to Communications Director, City of Toronto, 416-395-7655, cityoftoronto.ca

City’s release - Council approves packaging reductions

Backgrounder

November 20, 2011

Benefits of reducing the volume of plastic shopping bags

• Reduce carbon emissions, which is important for the City to be more energy efficient and cost-effective, which reduces the amount of carbon emitted than it would have been in the past.
• Reduce plastic bags generated per household per year.
• Reduce the amount of plastic bags generated per household per year.
• Reduce the amount of plastic bags generated per household per year.
• Reduce the amount of plastic bags generated per household per year.

There are a number of viable reusable alternatives to plastic shopping bags. Consumers are asked to make a positive environmental decision regarding the purchase of reusable, washable, ones today. In the reality of the 20s, people are always experimenting to have it all. Toronto has the potential to change the way shopping bags interact with retail and commercial activities. Products made with recycled plastic bags, such as trash bags, can be used, and others, should be avoided without a plan. The City will continue to provide information on how to reduce the amount of waste we produce.

Definitions:

- "Small landscape bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Small patch bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Large landscape bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Medium landscape bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Small patch bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Medium patch bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Small patch bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Medium patch bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.
- "Large patch bags" – any type of tractor, plow and/or other vehicles necessary for medium-sized lawns and land care.

Visit our Web site at www.toronto.ca