

# Oshawa Environmental Advisory Committee (OEAC): Report from the Mind Your Plastic Working Group September 5, 2023

Members: Emily Posteraro (Chair), Valerie Bowler, Robert Mullins

## Recommendations Implications:

- That the committee adopt the following comments for submission to the City of Oshawa in response to the Mind Your Plastic Correspondence Referral from the Economic and Development Services Committee on behalf of the Oshawa Environmental Advisory Committee

## Budget Implications:

None.

## Overview

Mind Your Plastic is a federal not-for-profit organization established in 2016. Their correspondence with the City of Oshawa Economic and Development Services Committee, which inquired if the City would adopt a Policy Banning Single-Use Plastics, and was referred to the OEAC for comment at the June 2023 OEAC meeting.

The proposed *Plastic-Free Events Policy* is one of three campaigns led by Mind Your Plastic. The goal of the policy is to reduce waste, introduce benefits of using reusable packaging at municipal events, and for the group to build partnerships with municipalities. As the organization stated in their correspondence with the Economic and Development Services Committee, “events are a great opportunity to adopt reusable materials and infrastructure, as [they] typically take place in one centralized location, which allows reusables to be easily tracked and returned throughout an event.” Oshawa has a number of large public events throughout the summer where this policy could be implemented, such as the Peony Festival, Fiesta Week, Canada Day, and the Oshawa Rotary Ribfest to name a few.

Within Durham Region, Mind Your Plastic has worked with the Town of Ajax to create a *Plastic Awareness and Reduction Toolkit*. The document offers information for both individuals and businesses to reduce their usage of single-use plastics (SUPs) at events and large gatherings. The Town of Ajax has *not* adopted the *Plastic-Free Events Policy*, which is what is being proposed to the City of Oshawa.

## General Comments:

1. The Working Group supports Mind Your Plastic in the presentation of their letter to the Economic and Development Services Committee.
2. The City of Oshawa already has water bottle filling stations and water fountains at Lakeview Park for the Canada Day event. This is a good first step towards reducing waste, beginning with plastic bottles, which are a ubiquitous form of SUPs. The City could go above and beyond by introducing a *Plastic-Free Events Policy*, for example by partnering with a company that provides reusable items (like plates, cups and cutlery) for large public events (examples of this can be found on page 12 of the Town of Ajax's *Plastic Awareness and Reduction Toolkit*). This policy would make Oshawa stand out as a leader on sustainability within Durham Region, lessen the burden on our municipal waste system, and set an example for residents to follow in their everyday lives.
3. The Working Group suggests that the City perform a waste audit of SUPs for its events over the course of one calendar year and present the results to the OEAC, as a step towards further reducing SUPs.
4. Drawing on the data from the waste audit, we recommend that the City works with Mind Your Plastic to implement a *Plastic-Free Events Policy*.