

ED-24-65 **(Previously OEAC-24-32)**

Mind Your Plastic Working Group Report for O.E.A.C. Meeting May 7, 2024

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Report:

Background

Mind Your Plastic is a federal not-for-profit organization established in 2016. They initially presented a letter to the Economic and Development Services Committee (EDSC) in June 2023, proposing that the City of Oshawa adopt a plastics-free event policy. This was referred to O.E.A.C. for comment at the June 2023 O.E.A.C. meeting, and a report was submitted by a working group for the September 2023 meeting. A working group was struck up again to provide recommendations to the EDSC after Mind Your Plastic delivered an informational presentation to O.E.A.C. at the February 2024 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 EDSC, “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.”

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.

Implications for the City of Oshawa

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. The City 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.

As an example of a plastic-free event, the Peterborough Folk Festival has volunteers running dishwashing stations, cleaning reusable plates and cutlery that are provided at the event rather than allowing food vendors to use disposable materials. Water bottle filling stations are available at the event, and beverages in cans and plastic bottles are not sold.

Budget implications: \$2,500 from the OEAC advertising budget is being offered for the creation of a *Plastic Awareness and Reduction Toolkit* if a *Plastic-Free Events Policy* is adopted.

Recommendations: That the City works with Mind Your Plastic to implement a *Plastic-Free Events Policy* and that the Oshawa Environmental Advisory Committee offer \$2,500 from their advertising budget line for the development of a *Plastic Reduction Toolkit* and webinar series for consideration from Committee and Council should they choose to proceed with implementing the aforementioned policy.