

GEORGIAN BAY
FOREVER



Single-Use Plastic Reduction Guide

Thank you for your interest in joining the Plastic-Free Georgian Bay (PFGB) Campaign to reduce single-use plastic consumption. We at Georgian Bay Forever are excited to learn about your business, help you make meaningful changes, and inspire others to do the same!

Where did our love of plastic begin? In the late 1800's developers of plastic worked to create a material that could be a cheap and effective alternative to natural resources. In 1907 Leo Baekeland invented the world's first fully synthetic plastic and in the 1960's and 1970's plastic began to be mass-produced as it continued to be a cheap and versatile way to replace many traditional materials. Simply put, plastic products were more convenient! The development and improvement of plastics over the years has led to advancements in so many fields, including medicine, transportation, technology, construction, agriculture, manufacturing and more. We wouldn't be where we are today without it!

While the amount of plastic we use is continuing to grow, the amount that's being recycled isn't. Canadians throw away 3 million tonnes of plastic waste every year. Most of the plastic isn't getting recycled. In fact, only 9% of our plastic waste is recycled yearly, the rest goes to landfills, waste-to-energy facilities and into the environment.

While one of the benefits of plastic is that it lasts a very long time, this is always one of its detriments, especially when it enters our landfills and the environment. When plastic enters our environment, it very slowly breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, polluting the water we drink and harming the outdoor places we love. Approximately 10,000 tonnes of plastic pollution enter the Great Lakes every year according to the Rochester Institute of Technology. Not only is plastic pollution in our environment a huge issue but there is also the issue around human consumption of plastics. The University of Newcastle states that on average people ingest 5 grams of plastic every week, which is equivalent to the weight of a credit card!

Plastic-Free Georgian Bay (PFGB), created by Georgian Bay Forever, works with businesses and members of the community to reduce plastic waste, expand public awareness about plastic pollution and show that everyone can take action in supporting a circular economy.

To join PFGB we ask you to complete an intro survey, take inventory of all the single-use and lightly used plastic products being used or sold at your business, and then work together with the PFGB team to create an action plan to eliminate, reduce, and replace unnecessary plastics in your business. Upon taking the commitment to make changes you will receive promotional materials to educate and show your customers that you are working to make positive changes in your community! PFGB members are available to assist every step of the way, contact Nicole Dimond at nicole.dimond@gbf.org or 905-880-4945 ext 5.

Ready to get started? Begin below!

Plastic Consumption Costs

How much money are these single-use and lightly used plastics costing you

Monthly?	
Yearly?	

Step 3: Eliminate, Reduce and Replace Single-use Plastics

Now that you have surveyed all the plastic in your business, list what plastics your business could possibly eliminate, reduce and/or replace to reduce your plastic consumption. List as many as possible so we can work together to pick a few achievable actions to start with!

Eliminate / Refuse

Examples - no plastic food wrap, no plastic bags available.

Reduce

Examples – Plastic products only available upon request, hand soap purchased in bulk to refill smaller containers

Replace

Examples - Plastic bottles pops replaced with cans, plastic stir sticks replaced with metal spoons

Step 4: Take Action and Make a Commitment

Now to decide where to start! Looking at the lists made in step 3, are there a few changes your businesses can commit to making now? Once you have decided, fill in the pledge form and email it to nicole.dimond@gbf.org along with your business logo and a short paragraph about your business.

More information:

About Biodegradable and Compostable Plastics

Biodegradable and compostable plastics are advertised as an eco-friendly alternative to traditional petroleum-based plastics. Biodegradable plastics (aka bioplastics), under the correct conditions, are able to break down by fungi, bacteria or microbes and are made from plants instead of petroleum like conventional plastics. The most common type of biodegradable plastic is a polylactic acid (PLA) plastic. PLA plastics are constructed using sugars in corn starch or sugarcane which consist of long carbon chain molecules similar to carbon chains found in plastic from fossil fuels. Biodegradable plastics are not a perfect alternative however, and they often end up in landfills because of chemical additives that many local organics programs don't have the facilities to process bioplastics. Contact your municipality's or county's waste facility to confirm if they can process biodegradable plastics.

Compostable plastics are made from plant-based materials such as bamboo, flax or corn but look and feel like conventional plastic. Compostable plastics are made to be broken down by microorganisms into natural substances like compost. Similar to biodegradable plastics, compostable plastics also require specific conditions in regard to UV sunlight rays, oxygen and high temperatures to properly decompose. This barrier causes many compostable plastics to end up in landfills as well.

When sent to landfill or released into the environment, biodegradable and compostable plastics are a hazard to wildlife and while they may eventually biodegrade (unlike conventional plastic) it could take years, decades or centuries. In summary, biodegradable and compostable plastics are a potential alternative to conventional plastics but, it's important to know what our local waste facilities are able to accept so we aren't creating more waste that must be sent to landfill.

Covid Considerations

When the COVID-19 pandemic began bringing reusable containers to restaurants, cafes, grocery stores and other shops was halted, and we saw an increase in the number of plastic bags and plastic containers used. More recently, while we are able to bring our reusable grocery bags into stores again many businesses are still not accepting the use of reusable containers. There are many articles that state accepting reusables is safe during COVID-19 with proper sanitation protocols. We encourage you to do your own research and determine what reusables are acceptable in your businesses given COVID-19 guidelines and continue to follow protocols.