

October 27, 2009

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
315 King St. W.
Chatham, Ontario
N7M 5K8

Attention: Mayor and Council

Dear Mayor Hope and Council:

As you would be aware, the Province of Ontario made an agreement with industry and environmental organizations to implement a program to see a reduction in plastic bag usage. As such, many corporations have instituted a charge for bags in efforts to reduce the use of these bags, diverting such waste from landfills. While this is a proactive initiative, the consumer is being charged extra while the retailer is finding new revenues from such with no real expectations of the utilization of these funds. In some cases it is proposed that portions of these revenues are supporting green initiatives without firm clarification.

In addition to the provincial agreement, as of June 1, 2009, the City of Toronto implemented a by-law which enforces all retailers (some sector exceptions allowed) to charge a minimum of 5c for plastic bags used. In these cases, the charge must be shown as a separate line item and the retailer or corporation cannot absorb the costs – they must be charged to the consumer.

At this time, the Board of Directors of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce is requesting Council to immediately initiate discussions for implementation of a Chatham-Kent by-law whereby retailers would be encouraged to utilize a portion of such revenues for local green initiatives. For example - 2 cents from each bag would be invested into environmental programs or services within Chatham-Kent while allowing the retailer recovery for their plastic bag costs while also supporting provincial and industry initiatives.

We believe that positive results could occur. When the consumer knows the retailer is giving back to local area initiatives they would be more willing to pay the 5c to help support the causes, should they not be utilizing a reusable bag. As the retailer would show this purchase as a separate line item (similar to showing tax) the implementation of this should not be overly burdensome and would be executed 'in good faith'. We propose the 2 cents could be collected and administered by the Municipality on a predetermined schedule such as a semi or annual basis.

Again, we deem the overall plastic bag initiative as a proactive means to a healthier environment and we also see an opportunity for the betterment of Chatham-Kent and mindset of all parties. We also suggest that it will only be a short time whereby most retailers, particularly larger corporations, will implement the plastic bag charge, whether a by-law is in place or not. The alternative being that further mandates are made and the Municipality will not have any jurisdiction or say in such matters. If we have a policy in place prior to any future mandate from the province and/or organizations, hopefully our policy would be grandfathered in.

I trust you will find this recommendation worthy of further discussion among our elected officials. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Yours truly,

Daryl Dawson
Chair