

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – MAY 14, 2007**

### **PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS**

#### **Recommendation**

Councillor Tony Carella recommends that The Greening Vaughan Advisory Committee be directed to bring forward a policy prohibiting the use of plastic shopping bags by merchants within the City of Vaughan, such policy to take effect no later than June 30, 2008.

#### **Economic Impact**

Nil

#### **Purpose**

To promote the City of Vaughan's "green agenda" by eliminating the use of a ubiquitous, and decidedly environmentally-*un*friendly shopping aid.

#### **Communication Plan**

The prohibition will be communicated via media release, notice on the City Page of local newspapers, and at the City of Vaughan website.

#### **Background – Analysis and Options**

Scientists agree that the plastic shopping bag is one of the most durable of those modern artifacts that eventually wind up in landfill sites. Their ubiquity compounds this phenomenon: some six million bags are used every day in Ontario. While some are *re*-used, they are not biodegradable, nor compostable, and cannot be recycled, meaning that even those reused several times will eventually be buried, where their estimated life is measured in hundreds of years.

With this in mind, a small number of municipalities across North America have banned plastic shopping bags, to be replaced by recyclable paper bags or tote bags. Given that the former requires an expenditure of energy in their production, and that their reuse is quite limited, reusable tote bags made of recycled plastic appear to be the most environmentally-friendly alternative---ones that are already on offer from some merchants in the City of Vaughan, at a cost ranging up two dollars.

A policy formally banning the supplying (either gratis or for a fee) of standard plastic bags by merchants and their resulting use by shoppers will advance the City's "green agenda", positioning Vaughan, once again, as a leader in terms of environmentally friendly practices.

#### **Regional Implications**

As the Region of York is responsible for the disposal of garbage, any reduction in the quantity of plastic bags that end up as garbage can only be a benefit to the Region.

**Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007**

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

**Attachments**

None

**Report prepared by:**

Councillor Tony Carella

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Carella  
Councillor – Ward 2  
City of Vaughan