Minute No. 374
Report – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – April 8, 2008

Item No. 1 Elimination of Plastic Grocery Bags
File E

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and adopted the following:

1. That an extension of time of up to 180 days be granted in order for the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works to report back on the matter.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Clement,

That the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee be concurred in.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 9, 2008, the Executive Policy Committee did not concur in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and recommended that an extension of time of up to 180 days be granted in order for the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works to report back on the matter, and forwarded to Council

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 8, 2008, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works recommended that the December 19, 2007 Council Motion and the report of the Director of Water and Waste dated February 25, 2008 be received as information, and submitted the matter to Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Further on April 8, 2008, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works received the following submissions:

- Cathy Cirko, Vice President, Environment and Health, Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA), submitted a communication entitled Discussion of the Ban of Plastic Shopping Bags from Seun Lim and Barry Murphy, Plytech in opposition to the elimination of plastic grocery bags.
- Jennifer Hillard, Research Director, Consumer Interest Allianace Inc., submitted a communication dated April 8, 2008 in opposition to the elimination of plastic grocery bags.
- Carolyn Garlich, Contact Person for Environmental Issues, Council of Women of Winnipeg submitted a presentation dated April 8, 2008 with respect to the elimination of plastic grocery bags.

On March 4, 2008, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works laid over consideration of the matter.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – April 8, 2008

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued)

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued)

Further on March 4, 2008, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works received submissions in opposition to the elimination of plastic grocery bags from the following:

- Justin Sherwood, Vice-President Western Region, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
- Cathy Cirko, Vice President, Environment and Health, Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA)

COUNCIL:

On February 20, 2008, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and adopted the following:

1. That an extension of time of 60 days be granted to enable the Winnipeg Public Service to report back as directed by the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works on January 8, 2008.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On February 5, 2008, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works recommended to Council that an extension of time of 60 days be granted to enable the Winnipeg Public Service to report back as directed by the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works on January 8, 2008.

On January 8, 2008, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works referred the Council Motion of December 19, 2007 to the Winnipeg Public Service for report back on the feasibility of the elimination of plastic bags and any other associated information, including but not limited to costs and possible recycling of plastic bags.

COUNCIL:

On December 19, 2007, Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works:

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – April 8, 2008

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued)

COUNCIL (continued)

Moved by Councillor Swandel,
Seconded by Councillor Steeves,

WHEREAS there is no consistent economical means of recycling plastic grocery bags;

AND WHEREAS they are constantly blowing form the landfill and store parking lots creating a visual blight in our clean and green City;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to prepare a report on a strategy for the elimination of their use in the City of Winnipeg.

RE: ELIMINATION OF PLASTIC GROCERY BAGS

FOR SUBMISSION TO: THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL AND PUBLIC WORKS

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED BY: Barry D. MacBride, P. Eng.
Director of the Water and Waste Department

REPORT DATE: February 25, 2008

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Council direct the Winnipeg Public Service to undertake an enhanced promotion and education program for the purpose of increasing awareness of the need to reduce, re-use and recycle plastic bags.

2. That Council indicates support for the Province of Manitoba initiative in implementing the Printed Paper and Packaging Regulation with targets set for the reduction, re-using and recycling of plastic bags.

Report Summary

KEY ISSUES:

Two municipalities in Canada have prohibited retailers from providing customers plastic bags. A review of the City of Winnipeg strategy for reducing the adverse environmental impacts of plastic bags is warranted.

The Province of Manitoba is adopting a regulation that would require producers of any packaging (including plastic grocery bags) to be responsible for meeting recycling targets.

The Water and Waste Department plans to increase promotion and education for the purpose of reducing, re-using and recycling plastic bags. Funds are available in the 2008 operating budget to cover this expenditure.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION(S):

General Implications

x	None
	For the organization overall and/or for other departments
	For the community and/or organizations external to the City of Winnipeg
	Involves a multi-year contract

Comment(s):

Policy Implications

x	No
	Yes

Comment(s):

Regulatory Implications

x	None
	Eliminates or reduces regulatory impact
	Proposes regulatory impact

Comment(s): If Council did decide to ban plastic grocery bags, there would be an increase in regulation over the status quo

Environmental Implications

x	No
	Yes

Comment(s): If a ban was in place, a reduction in the number of plastic bags will have a positive environmental impact providing that reusable bags are used in their place. While paper bags are degradable, there is concern over the impact of production

Human Resources Implications

x	No
	Yes

Comment(s):

Financial Implications

x	Within approved current and/or capital budget
	Current and/or capital budget adjustment required

Comment(s):

REPORT

REASON FOR THE REPORT:

On January 8, 2008 the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works referred the Council motion of December 19, 2007 to the Winnipeg Public Service for report back on the feasibility of the elimination of plastic bags and any other associated information, including but not limited to costs and possible recycling of plastic bags.

HISTORY:

On December 19, 2007 Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works:

Moved by Councillor Swandel,
Seconded by Councillor Steeves,

WHEREAS there is no consistent economical means of recycling plastic grocery bags.

AND WHEREAS they are consistently blowing from the landfill and store parking lots creating visual blight in our clean and green City;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to prepare a report on a strategy for the elimination of their use in the City of Winnipeg.

DISCUSSION:

Plastic grocery bags are prevalent in Winnipeg as in many North American cities. It is estimated that each person uses four bags per week on average. For Winnipeg that would mean 135 million plastic grocery bags annually.

A Winnipeg waste composition study completed in 2000 indicates that all plastic bags comprise less than 1% of the residential solid waste by weight. Plastic bags do not biodegrade in a landfill and do not contribute to greenhouse gas emissions or leachate production. The Canadian Plastics Industries Association (CPIA) reports that audits indicate 50% of all the plastic bags are reused prior to being disposed of. The City of Toronto completed an audit[1] and found that plastic film represented 2.7% of street litter.

[1] http://www.cpia.ca/files/files/2006_toronto_litter_report.pdf

Recently, plastic bags have been receiving much public attention as an environmental nuisance mostly due to their impact when not disposed of properly. Critics cite the visual impact of plastic bags in loose litter, the damage to aquatic and land-based animals and the use of non-renewable fossil fuels in the manufacturing of plastic bags. A recent CBC documentary highlighted the negative issues with the improper disposal of plastic bags.[2]

It is possible to recycle plastic bags into other materials, such as composite lumber. The CPIA has established a network of 41 retail locations in Winnipeg that accept plastic bags for recycling. Many retailers are promoting reusable bags as well. The City promotes these programs on our website and through various media opportunities as they arise. The City also funds Take Pride Winnipeg to provide litter education for residents.

The City does not accept plastic bags in the residential recycling program. This change was made in 2002 when the blue box program was improved to accept all plastic bottles and tubs and to eliminate the need for residents to sort their recyclables prior to collection, know in the industry as single stream recycling. The objective of single stream recycling is to reduce confusion and increase recycling rates. However, plastic bags are not compatible with the automated sorting equipment. Recycling has increased since this change was made.

Since the plastic bags are not compatible with the automatic sorting equipment, it is not feasible to add plastic bags to the blue box without significant changes, for example enlarging the material recycling facility and hand sorting the materials, a very labour intensive process. We did not determine a cost to make those changes but we suspect the cost would be unacceptable.

Options

1. Increase promotion and education.

While there are facilities available in Winnipeg for the recycling of plastic bags it is suspected that many residents are not aware of this. A promotion program could increase this awareness and increase the recycling rate of the bags. The Water and Waste Department proposes an expenditure of $15,000 from existing 2008 budgets to provide a number of advertisements for this purpose. The messaging could also include reduction and re-use of plastic bags. These funds could possibly be levered with other organizations, such as CPIA, to multiple the effectiveness of this expenditure.

2. Support the Province of Manitoba initiatives currently being developed.

[2] http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/battleofthebag/video.html

An option for Council is to wait and see how the provincial initiative in this regard unfolds. The Province is currently adopting a **Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Regulation** under ***The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act*** where industries that sell packaging including plastic grocery bags will be responsible for ensuring their products are recycled. This is the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility. This change was announced in January 2007[3], a draft regulation[4] was circulated for public comment and the final regulation is expected to be enacted shortly. Plastic bags are part of this regulation and there will be targets set for industry to achieve. The Department expects that this enhancement will increase the recycling rates for plastic grocery bags and for other recyclables.

3. Eliminate plastic bags at retail outlets

It is feasible to pass a bylaw banning the use of single use plastic grocery bags. While there are a number of municipalities in Canada looking at this option there are only two small towns that have actually banned plastic grocery bags, Leaf Rapids, Manitoba being one. The most notable municipality in North America with a ban is San Francisco. San Francisco's ordinance requires the use of recyclable paper bags, compostable plastic bags and/or reusable bags as checkout bags.

Of course, there are residents that reuse plastic grocery bags for collecting dog excrement and/or household wastes. As mentioned it is estimated that 50% of the plastic bags are re-used in this manner. If these bags were not available, residents may possibly purchase single use plastic bags for these purposes therefore partially negating the positive aspects of the ban. At the retail checkout counter, the plastic bags would be replaced with paper bags although it would be likely that more customers would switch to re-usable bags. The increased demand for paper bags would increase the adverse environmental impacts of forestry operations while reducing the amount of fossil fuels used to manufacture plastic bags.

If a ban were implemented it would require resources for monitoring of retail outlets and enforcement activities.

Brady Road Litter

The Council motion of December 19, 2007 notes plastic bag litter from landfills. The Brady Road Landfill has an aggressive litter collection program along the Perimeter Highway and nearby lands. Litter is picked almost daily, depending on weather conditions. The number of complaints received regarding litter from the Brady Landfill is almost negligible. There were no complaints received in 2007.

[3] http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2007/01/2007-01-24-114300-1002.html
[4] http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/pollutionprevention/waste/steward_reg_draft.pdf

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The following financial impact statement for this project has been prepared in accordance with the recommendation adopted by Council on December 13, 2000.

Financial Impact Statement

Date: February 25, 2008

Project Name:
ELIMINATION OF PLASTIC GROCERY BAGS

First Year of Program **2008**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Capital					
Capital Expenditures Required		$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budgeted Costs		-	-	-	-
Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Funding Sources:					
Debt - Internal	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Debt - External	-	-	-	-	-
Grants (50% from Senior Gov'ts)	$ -	-	-	-	-
Reserves, Equity, Surplus		-	-	-	-
Other - Enter Description Here	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -				
Total Additional Debt Required	$ -				
Current Expenditures/Revenues					
Direct Costs	$ 15,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Incremental Revenue/Recovery	-	-	-	-	-
Net Cost/(Benefit)	$ 15,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budget Amounts	15,000	-	-	-	-
Net Budget Adjustment Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

Additional Comments: Funding available within 2008 operating budget (445 526030 201907)

"Original signed by M. L. Geer, C.A."
Moira L. Geer, C.A.
Manager of Finance & Administration

IN PREPARING THIS REPORT THERE WAS:

Internal Consultation With and Concurrence By:

Civic Environmental Coordinator

External Consultation With:

N/A

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

Water and Waste Department
Solid Waste Services Division
Prepared by: Dan McInnis
Processed by: Tamara Siemens
Fax. No. 986-3745
File No. 011-15-08-00-00