

## **Solve the Central Problem of Plastic Pollution in the Environment**



### **AN ANTI-LITTERING STRATEGY FOR ONTARIO**

#### **The Problem the Federal Government is Completely Ignoring - Littering**

- The federal government in their effort to tackle plastic pollution has not identified littering as a serious environmental pollution problem that needs to be addressed.
- It is completely ignoring the issue. Its focus is on banning single use plastics and to be the first and only country in the world to declare the material “plastics” toxic/poisonous.
- The ECCC has “guesstimated” that 1% plastic waste enters the environment in Canada. However, the noted Jambeck Research Group in their study of plastic waste in 192 countries found that Canada mismanaged less than 1% (0.4%) of its waste or 7,959 tonnes versus the 29,000 postulated by ECCC.

#### **The Ontario Government Already Showing Leadership on Littering**

- The Ontario government has already identified littering as an important source of plastic pollution in the environment that needs to be addressed and stopped.
- The Province sees pollution in the environment not a material problem but a people behaviour problem – the careless dropping of man-made materials onto our streets, in our parks and on our beaches.
- The Province has already taken action on public education and awareness.

#### **Building Awareness of the Problem and Encouraging Direct Action, But More Needs to be Done**

- In 2019, the Provincial Government passed the “Combatting Litter for the Environment and Nature Act” declaring the second Tuesday in May A Provincial Day of Action on Litter.
- This is an excellent first step. Not only will it help to clean up litter, but it will start the very long and ongoing process needed to educate the public and change consumer littering behaviour.

## **Opportunity: Expand Provincial Policy Focus to Stop Littering at Source**

### **Action 1: Empower Municipalities to Enforce Litter Laws and Reduce Street Litter**

- This action helps clean up street litter that blows into green areas and gets into our waterways. And it provides municipalities with a revenue source to justify implementation and enforcement activities.
- Most municipalities in Ontario have anti-dumping laws and treat “dumping” of waste as a crime. But very few municipalities have littering laws and those that do don’t enforce them. The main reason for this is that littering is deemed hard to enforce and costly because of its focus on individuals. The Province can change that.
- The Province could under its new 2019 Controlling Litter legislation create a regulatory framework that ties ownership of street litter to properties – retail, institutional, commercial and even residential absentee landlords. Instead of fining individuals, retail establishments like Tim Hortons and Starbucks would be responsible for keeping their property free.
- Municipalities would be empowered to create bylaws and use enforcement officers to enforce the bylaw. This is an excellent reduction strategy that would ensure immediate action on litter abatement and allow municipalities to earn revenue via a fine regime that would see fines put onto the business property tax bill.
- Multi-residential properties could also be included in this program to ensure that they practice proper waste containment procedures to reduce blowing litter onto city streets from poorly managed waste bins.

### **Action 2: Fight Against Microfibre Pollution Begins with Washing Your Laundry**

- Studies show that microfibres make up between 52 to 60% of microplastics found in Canada’s wastewater. (*Draft Science Assessment of Plastic Pollution, ECCO 2020 and Ocean Wise Plastic Lab Report, Me, My Clothes the Ocean the Role of Textiles in Microplastic Pollution*)
- Domestic laundering is the most common source. A single wash can release thousands of fibers into washing machine [effluent](#) with every wash.
- One of the most effective reduction strategies is the use of lint traps on washing machines (similar to the lint trap process used on dryers). We are aware that most washing machines come with lint traps however, the effectiveness of the traps is in question.
- Our goal as a government is to stop microfibres from entering the wastewater system so we will be working with the washing machine distributors and retailers in Ontario to ensure the effectiveness of these traps and making sure that consumers know how to use them. We will also if necessary be making recommendations on external wall mounted lint traps.