



Toronto needs to ditch the disposables to act on climate change

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TORONTO: Today, the City of Toronto launches its second round of public consultations on how to reduce or eliminate certain single-use plastics and takeaway items.

There was a record-breaking turn out at last year's waste consultation with more than 20,000 people sharing their views. While many are motivated to act on plastics because of harm caused to wildlife and waterways, climate change is another important reason why action must be taken immediately.

"The biggest growth area for oil and gas globally is not for transportation, it's for the production of more plastic," says Emily Alfred, Waste Campaigner with the Toronto Environmental Alliance. Plastics are made from fossil fuels and all forms of disposable packaging and foodware, whether it's recyclable or compostable, require significant energy to produce.

"A food or drink container is used for only a few minutes, and most of the time a reusable container could have been used instead," says Alfred. "If we are serious about climate action, we can't keep drilling oil and gas to make more throwaway containers."

The City of Toronto is considering regulations like bans and fees on single-use items. TEA welcomes these measures but is looking for the City to go further. "The City needs to take a comprehensive approach to getting to zero waste -- if the City bans one thing and businesses switch to another single-use option, we haven't really moved the needle," warns Alfred.

TEA wants to see the City play a lead role in shifting businesses towards the solution: reusable foodware. Other municipalities have passed laws that require businesses to have reusable foodware for food and drink consumed in their restaurant. "While reusable foodware is gaining momentum in Toronto, it shouldn't just be the responsibility of individuals to carry around all of their own containers," says Alfred.

Alfred is cautiously optimistic about the City of Toronto's consultation. "Toronto is not only eager to ditch the disposables, we're ready for reusable solutions and we hope to see bold zero waste strategies reflected in the City's consultation," says Alfred.

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