

A Resolution Submitted by the Township of the Archipelago, ON



**INCENTIVIZING EFFORTS TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLATICS POLLUTION AND ENCOURAGE
FRESHWATER STEWARDSHIP**

May 2024

WHEREAS the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin represent 20 percent of surface freshwater worldwide, sustaining livelihoods and economic activity in a region of over 40 million people, including the majority of Canadians.

AND WHEREAS there is a growing body of research pointing to significant pollution of our invaluable freshwater resources, including a recent study by McGill University that found sediment from the St. Lawrence River to have an unprecedented concentration of microplastics for a river, on par with some of the most heavily-polluted ocean sediments.

AND WHEREAS some of these studies have evidenced the impact of specific kinds of plastic products – such as cigarette butts – as severe threats to aquatic life and ecosystems.

AND WHEREAS, as reported on July 26, 2023, to the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, Pollution Probe's Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup identified cigarette butts as one of the top five items of microplastics found in the Great Lakes.

AND WHEREAS some companies use materials that are non-biodegradable and can take centuries to degrade, if ever.

AND WHEREAS these companies reap the benefits of the sale of these products, without paying any costs to the broader community remotely commensurate with the harm caused, thus disincentivizing the use of sustainable materials in these products.

AND WHEREAS the Province of Ontario has successfully implemented producer responsibility programs for various industries – such as electronics, packaging and batteries – resulting in significant improvements in waste management and environmental sustainability.

AND WHEREAS a growing number of governmental organizations, including the European Union, have begun using the polluter pays principle as a core tenant of environmental laws and producer responsibility programs to hold plastics producers financially responsible for the damages caused by their products, thus disincentivizing harmful practices and creating a revenue source to fund cleanup efforts and research.

AND WHEREAS other programs akin to the one in Ontario exist across the basin, such as the “Règlement sur la récupération et la valorisation de produits par les entreprises” in Québec.

AND WHEREAS cigarette manufacturers’ exclusion from current producer responsibility programs in Ontario and Québec creates an inconsistency in environmental policy and hampers overall efforts to reduce waste in our drinking-water sources.

AND WHEREAS addressing the environmental impact of cigarette manufacturing, usage and disposal is imperative.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- The Township of the Archipelago calls on all governments across the basin to act effectively to:
 - force private enterprises to uphold higher standards and limit microplastics and other chemical pollution of our freshwater
 - actively collaborate to protect the quality of our freshwater and its ecosystems, including participating in international efforts, such as the Global Plastics Treaty currently being developed by the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution and Plastic Free July
- Federal and provincial/state governments should also:
 - include cigarette butts as pre-identified harmful wastes as part of their producer responsibility programs if that is not already implemented
 - take further steps to ensure manufacturers are responsible for collecting, recycling and properly disposing of harmful waste. This shall include monitoring activities and collaboration with other relevant public-health, environment and waste-disposal stakeholders
 - implement policies that align with the international best standards of the polluter pays principle, such as forcing the manufacturers and other stakeholders

that gain economic benefits from the sale of the products at the source of the pollution:

- Take financial responsibility for collecting, transporting, recycling, or safely disposing of discarded cigarettes and related waste materials
 - Develop and engage in public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the environmental impact of cigarette butt litter and implement programs to educate the public on the safe disposal of cigarette butts
 - Implement measures to minimize the environmental impact of their products through the use of sustainable materials, reduced packaging, and improved recycling initiatives
- The Government of Canada, especially through its newly created Canada Water Agency, should:
 - expand the list of pollutants to be monitored to better evidence the issue of chemical and microplastic pollution in our freshwater and fund monitoring activities across the basin
 - issue a notice for reporting of certain plastic manufactured items, including cigarette butts and filters, vaping products and other single-use plastic products
 - work with industry to approve biodegradable alternatives to cigarette filters and other single-use plastic items used in Canada

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT copies of this resolution will be distributed to: the Government of Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Governments of Québec and Ontario's Ministers of Environment and of Health.