

NEWS RELEASE

Ottawa's plan to reach zero plastic waste by 2030 will have virtually no effect on the environment, but will impose high costs on Canadians

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER— Earlier this week, the federal government announced the first phase of its plan to reach zero plastic waste by 2030, which will have little to no environmental benefit while imposing a large financial cost on Canadians, finds a new study published by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Canada’s contribution to the global issue of aquatic plastic pollution is virtually non-existent, but banning plastic—almost all of which is properly disposed of in Canada—will impose high costs on Canadians and will actually result in more waste being generated,” said Kenneth P. Green, senior fellow at the Fraser Institute and author of *Canada’s Wasteful Plan to Regulate Plastic Waste*.

In 2021, the federal government announced its plan to phase-out plastic waste by 2030, and earlier this week, the government announced the first step—a ban on straws, takeout containers, grocery bags, cutlery, stir sticks and plastic rings used to hold cans or bottles together.

The study finds that the government’s overall plan will produce little to no environmental benefit. In fact, the government’s own analysis finds that only one per cent of Canada’s plastic waste is ever released into the environment as litter, with the rest being disposed of properly through recycling, incineration, or landfills.

Likewise, Canada’s contribution to global aquatic plastic pollution, when assessed in 2016, was between 0.02 per cent and 0.03 per cent of the global total. The government’s *Zero-Plastic Waste 2030* plan will only prevent an almost undetectable reduction of three thousandths of one per cent of aquatic plastic pollution.

And whatever minimal environmental benefits might be achieved by banning plastic could be offset by the increased environmental harms of the plastic substitutes, including paper products and organic materials. Again, based on the government’s own analysis, while banning plastic will prevent approximately 1.6 million tonnes of plastics from entering the waste stream, it will add approximately 3.2 million tonnes of substitute materials for a net increase in waste.

Crucially, the additional waste generated by the substitutes for plastic will increase costs for municipalities by \$300 million a year, which is just one cost of this policy that will ultimately be a burden on Canadians.

“Instead of banning plastics in Canada, a move that will do virtually nothing to address the global issue of plastic pollution, policymakers should instead focus on improper waste disposal in Canada as a way of reducing what little amount of Canadian plastic that does end up as litter,” Green said.

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