

Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment

**Options for the Management of Single-Use Plastic Items in Newfoundland and Labrador with an  
Emphasis on Single-Use Plastic Shopping Bags**

September 24, 2018  
Brinton Room, Murray Premises Hotel  
5 Beck's Cove, St. John's

**Summary Notes**

**Attendees:**

- Marie Ryan, Facilitator, Goss Gilroy Inc.
- Gary Ryan, Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB)
- Ashley Burke, Multi-Materials Stewardship Board
- Michelle Dunn, Executive Assistant to the CEO, Multi-Materials Stewardship Board
- Rob Locke, Service NL
- Peter Haring, Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment (MAE)
- Dan Michielson, Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment
- Dana Spurrell, Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment
- Jamie Chippett, Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment
- Erin Shea, Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment
- Gerry Gros, Northern Peninsula Regional Service Board (NPRSB)
- Harold Murphy, Burin Peninsula Regional Service Board (BPRSB)
- Ken Kelly, Eastern Regional Service Board (ERSB)
- Trent Quinton, Western Regional Service Board (WRSB) – via Teleconference
- Jason King, Western Regional Service Board – via Teleconference
- Andrew Niblock, Robin Hood Bay Waste Management Facility
- Robert Elliott, Central Newfoundland Regional Service Board (CRSB)
- Joe Hruska, Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA)
- Christina Marciano, Sussex Strategy (Consultant to Canadian Plastics Industry Association)
- Vaughn Hammond, Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB)
- Jim Cormier, Retail Council of Canada (RCC)
- Tony Keats, Municipalities Newfoundland & Labrador (MNL)
- Kathleen Parewick, Municipalities Newfoundland & Labrador

**Regrets:**

- Kieran Hanley, Newfoundland Environmental Industries Association (NEIA)

## **1.0 Opening Address - Municipal Affairs and Environment**

The Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, Chair and CEO of MMSB, Jamie Chippett welcomed participants. He noted that all participants at the meeting have a strong interest and also differing opinions on plastic, and that government would like to hear everyone's thoughts and consider, as policy makers and regulators, an approach to the common goal of reducing plastic waste.

Government has seen action on single-use plastic items such as straws, bags, take-out food containers and other plastics abroad. At the G7 Summit in 2018, Canada committed to the Ocean Plastics Charter which aims to avoid unnecessary use of plastics and prevent waste, and to ensure that plastics are designed for recovery, reuse, recycling and end-of-life management to prevent waste.

Highlighted goals of the Oceans Plastic Charter include working with industry and other levels of government to recycle and reuse at least 55% of plastic packaging by 2030 and recover 100% of all plastics by 2040. The Charter also commits Canada to strengthen measures, such as market-based instruments, to prevent plastics from entering the oceans.

The Minister sent his regrets but wished participants a good and respectful day. A successful day would see participants working towards tangible goals and deliverables and timelines for the goals.

## **2.0 Overview of Meeting Objectives and Agenda – GGI**

M. Ryan overviewed the meeting objectives and main agenda items.

### *Meeting Objectives*

- Understand perspectives on the presence and management of single-use plastic items with an emphasis on plastic shopping bags in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).
- Determine long-term policy options to address the presence and/or management of single-use plastic items that could work in NL, with an emphasis on plastic shopping bags.
- Identify short-term activities that support the long-term option(s).

### *Meeting Agenda*

- Municipal, regional and industry perspectives on the presence and management of single-use plastic items in NL.
- An overview and discussion of available options to impact the availability, consumption and/or management of plastic bags including voluntary reduction strategies and regulatory/economic policy instruments and the merits of each.
- Identification of longer-term options and short-term action for managing plastic bags in NL.

## **3.0 Background and Timeline – MMSB**

MMSB provided a brief overview of the history and timeline of the issue of single use plastic items in NL, with an emphasis on plastic bags.

Highlights of recent events in relation to this issue:

- 2009 Dominion and Save Easy charged five cents for plastic bags in an attempt to achieve reduction. Sobeys didn't participate, and so Dominion cancelled their initiative to avoid losing market share
- 2009 Nain became the first community in the province to pass a bylaw to ban the distribution of plastic shopping bags by retailers
- 2012 Rigolet passed a bylaw to ban the distribution of free plastic shopping bags
- 2013 Hopedale passed a bylaw to ban the distribution of plastic shopping bags
- 2015 Makkovik and Postville passed bylaws to ban the distribution of plastic shopping bags
- 2015 MNL requested the Province ban the distribution of single use plastic bags
- 2017 Walmart started charging five cents per bag in NL; a voluntary action on their part
- 2017 On World Environmental Day, Coleman's started remitting five cents to customers using reusable bags
- 2017 Retailers on Fogo Island agreed to no longer distribute plastic bags; switching to reusable bags
- 2017 The Waste Management Technical Committee finished the review of the proposed province-wide plastic bag distribution ban as well as alternatives – developed the report on Plastic Shopping Bag Management in NL
- 2017 The City of St. John's voted to support a provincial distribution ban
- 2017 MNL announced that members voted in support of a provincially mandated distribution ban
- 2018 Sobeys announced that bags distributed in PEI would use 30% less plastic
- 2018 On Earth Day, Dollarama started charging five cents for plastic shopping bags
- 2018 NLC announced that effective November 1, 2018 it will not distribute plastic shopping bags
- Today – Municipal, regional and industry representatives meet to discuss options for the future management of single use plastic bags in NL

MMSB also noted that in 2016, the organization completed a province-wide roadside litter audit which identified convenience store items, cigarette butts and disposable cups as the main sources of large litter. Of the 5,453 large pieces of litter documented, 6% was plastic bags.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder Perspectives: Roundtable – Goss Gilroy**

During the roundtable, participants were given an opportunity to provide their perspective on the presence and management of single-use plastic items in NL with a focus on plastic bags. The participants were asked to consider, for example:

- What is the source of the issue – *what are the problematic single-use plastics? What is compounding the problem e.g., consumer behavior/indifference; landfill challenges; inefficient disposal sites? What research/data exists to support perspectives?*
- What are the impacts of single-use plastics – economic, environmental, social?
- At the end of the day, where should energies be focused?

### **Central Regional Service Board – Robert Elliot**

CRSB has a lined landfill site surrounded by a 40 foot high fence and netting. However, wind can still lift bags and film over this barrier. Every spring and summer, CRSB hires laborers to clean up the plastic bags which have blown from the landfill.

CRSB considers plastic bags a nuisance and are supportive of a distribution ban. Discussions with some businesses in the region also reveal support for a ban due to savings from not having to purchase shopping bags.

A ban would have a visual impact - a visible message that, as a province, we are doing something positive for the environment.

CRSB stated that reusable bags are the solution, but as long as the plastic bags are available, most people are going to use them.

### **Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA) – Joe Hruska**

Key points included:

- CPIA stated that they would like to work with all of the stakeholders at the meeting to reduce waste going into the environment.
- CPIA highlighted the results of a lifecycle analysis conducted on single-use plastic bags versus paper bags stating that the environmental cost of plastic in consumer goods is 3.8 times less than the materials that would be needed to replace plastic.
- CPIA stated that plastics deliver significant environmental and societal benefits, including: energy savings; reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; and innovations that improve health care, reduce food spoilage and improve quality of life.
- Landfills are the old way to manage waste. CPIA recommended that the province look at other approaches that contain waste such as waste to energy facilities or balefills to reduce windblown plastics.
- Single-purpose reusable bags are going to be a landfill issue over time because they cannot be recycled and can only go to landfills as garbage at the end of their life.
- In CPIA's experience, 85% of people are usually supportive of a ban, but once people are educated (on the carbon footprint (lifecycle analysis) of paper versus plastic), the support fades.
- Banning plastic bags will result in the use of many more paper bags and other types of plastic bags – e.g., kitchen catchers. Upon instituting a fee on plastic shopping bags in Ireland, plastic imports on kitchen catchers increased by 21%.
- Paper takes up seven times more space in landfills if it is not recycled.
- Zero plastic waste to landfill is achieved by reuse + recycling + recovery. There are innovative approaches including converting post-consumer plastics into original state molecules to be reused in new products.
- Sustainability is the 4<sup>th</sup> R - recover.
- CPIA stated that:
  - Life cycle analyses by three major governments prove that the thin plastic shopping bag is the most efficient use of resources of all the alternatives on the market.

- Plastic shopping bags are “multi-purpose and multi-use bags”.
- Based on volume and weight they are an insignificant part of the waste stream – usually comprising 0.25 – 0.5% of waste sent to landfill.
- CPIA reiterated that a key principle is to take emotion out of policy decisions: decisions related to the environment must be based on science and fact and must consider the intended and unintended consequences of the decisions.
- Effective policy must address:
  1. Environmental performance (lifecycle analyses)
  2. Economic costs (\$’s value chain)
  3. Social issues, e.g. consumer behaviour - how consumers use bags in their daily lives

CPIA order of preference:

- Voluntary reduction
- Bag fee (fees will garner 50%-78% reduction in plastic bag consumption)
- Retailer strategies

#### **Western Regional Service Board – Jason King and Trent Quinton**

WRSB does its best to manage plastic bags. They maintain the landfill throughout the year, but when the snow melts there is a proliferation of plastic bags, which makes it seem like the region is doing a poor job. From both an optics and political perspective, plastic bags look bad.

The majority of wind-blown debris is plastic bags. They see plastic impacting wildlife: birds get entangled at WRSB’s sites, and some gulls on the landfills eat entire bags.

WRSB has hired people to come in and clean up, but there are some health and safety issues – e.g., climbing trees to get the bags.

Going forward, the WRSB will be closing all of the landfills in the region. In mid-July, WRSB began operating transfer stations. The region has not had the depth of experience to date to know how the plastic bags will impact the transfer facilities.

In past years, groceries were carried in brown paper bags. If plastic bags are banned, an alternative will need to be identified. They recognize that there are downsides to proposed alternatives: e.g., the cotton bag has to be laundered and then there is a requirement for energy usage.

WRSB asked what the cost implications are if the province switches to paper instead. WRSB also asked what the impact will be on retailers – it would be beneficial to get numbers on these alternatives.

WRSB’s Board of Directors has discussed the MNL resolution and to date they are supportive of a distribution ban.

#### **Burin Peninsula Regional Service Board – Harold Murphy**

BPRSB supports CRSB's philosophical approach and WRSB's business perspective.

The plastic bags are not a huge weight in their landfills, but they are a huge nuisance. Plastic bags make the landfill unsightly and have an effect on trees and wildlife. The bags create serious issues for their equipment, necessitating expensive repairs.

BPRSB believes a ban is a good solution – both practically and politically.

There is a need for a provincial answer – one which does not negatively impact their bottom line, but which is practical. BPRSB notes that if there is a fee implemented for using plastic bags, some percentage of the fees should be remitted to the RSBs.

BPRSB wondered about the potential of pairing NL's textiles overuse and high unemployment rate to solve some of this problem (e.g., creating reusable bags from gently used textiles – similar to Boomerang Bags).

If the province decides to adopt a provincial fee, BPRSB would support the fee finding its way back to the regions who manage the material at the end of its life.

#### **Municipalities NL – Tony Keats and Kathleen Parewick**

MNL represents 276 municipalities – just over 90% of the population. Communities spend a lot of money beautifying their towns and each has a plastic bag problem. 50% of the plastic bags generated are escaping from the landfills. Many of these bags are finding their way into the ocean.

MNL voted unequivocally for a distribution ban following significant discussion in recent years. It would be very difficult for each municipality to enact regulations and monitor compliance. This is a provincial problem and, as such, there should be a provincial ban. The province can be a leader in this regard.

MNL sees mounting support for solutions to the problem – not only in the province, but federally and internationally. They stated that Costco has never offered shopping bags, and everyone is fine with their approach.

The MNL plastic shopping bag resolution in 2015 resulted in discussion on finding alternatives. There is recognition that finding alternatives will be a challenge (e.g., foodbanks are concerned with how they would be able to hand out supplies to their patrons). However, there is still strong support for a distribution ban on plastic bags.

They see opportunities for economic development – creation of a new product as an alternative to the plastic bag. They want an extra “R” – replace.

A graphic presented by MNL illustrated the connection between single-use plastics and climate change. Policies should consider reducing oil (non-renewable resource) consumption and the reduction of the outputs of plastics.

MNL stated that education is important – our children know more than we do. There is a need to reinforce behavior which moves us to change. We need to help people to see that through their efforts, change is possible.

There is a need to tackle the issue: even small actions which move us toward the solution are important.

### **NPRSB – Gerry Gros**

NPRSB's Board has expressed concern regarding the unsightliness around their landfill and surrounding area. NPRSB supports a distribution ban on plastic shopping bags.

There is a need to find technologies that fit the geographical and economic realities of the regions, as opposed to those which are designed for high density areas in other jurisdictions.

NPRSB is interested in the outcomes of the initiative in Chester Nova Scotia designed to convert solid waste into clean energy.

Their region is looking at high heat incineration. They acknowledge the concerns with this approach e.g., emissions, but they are looking for cost-effective solutions. This solution could have the added benefit of better containing waste.

### **Robin Hood Bay Waste Management Facility – Andrew Niblock**

Following consultation with other jurisdictions across Canada, St. John's decided not to include plastic bags/film in the curbside recycling program. Because of the distance to and availability of end markets, the City opted to focus efforts on maximizing the quality of the end product coming out of its recycling facility. This choice has proven to be beneficial for the City, with established markets for most of its materials in North America rather than Asia. Right now, without an EPR program for packaging and paper, they would make no revenue or could risk having to pay to ship plastic bags to an end market, if an end market could even be found. Specific issues:

- Plastic creates issues with handling, extra processing and sorting.
  - Some types of plastics (e.g., lids and containers) create little to zero revenue and it costs them money to process and transport the plastics. With some types of plastic, there is no end market.
  - Plastic creates issues with the recycling facility. Shopping bags, films and wraps are the most mobile in waste. Robin Hood Bay spends a lot of money trying to reduce this waste including about half a million dollars on maintenance of their fencing. Litter crews are onsite every day and plastic is the predominant issue. Equipment fires are caused by plastic getting wrapped around the mechanisms.
  - Recycling plastic bags seems like a good practice but, in reality, it would be problematic. They are concerned that residents would try to recycle every sort of plastic including that which is not recyclable. People confuse various materials and recycle what they think is plastic.

They stated that some jurisdictions close their landfills when high winds prevail, but this is not feasible here (the landfill could end up being closed for over half of the winter).

They recognize that there are other options that could be pursued instead of a ban. There is a need to see the whole picture, and an EPR program for packaging and paper would help.

### **Canadian Federation of Independent Business – Vaughn Hammond**

A good portion of the CFIB membership is involved in the hospitality and tourism sectors and will be affected by any decision on how to address plastic bags.

CFIB has changed their position and, currently, support a province-wide plastic bag ban. Plastic bags are a visible problem. However, many members are concerned with how the ban will be implemented and how this will impact their business.

If government leaves it to small business to implement programs, this is an additional cost to them which in turn will result in more expensive options for customers – e.g., reusable bags will be an additional cost to the consumer. This will lead to increased customer complaints. Government needs to educate consumers to offset the likelihood of such complaints.

Plastic bags are four to five cents/bag to purchase while paper is about 10 cents/bag - if no other options are determined, this is an increased cost to small businesses.

Government committed in 2009 and reaffirmed in 2014 that they are considering an EPR program for paper and packaging. If the cost is passed along to small business owners, together with the cost of the alternative to plastic bags, this impacts small business.

CFIB feels that while a distribution ban benefits the environment, there is a cost to this action. Government needs to understand what the impact on the small business owners will be.

### **Eastern Regional Service Board – Ken Kelly**

The issue of plastic bags is a touch point for people. They feel like they can have an impact.

ERSB stated that there are operational challenges with the plastic film.

ERSB has passed a motion to support the single-use plastic bag ban, but notes that there is a need to see the research and economics to support it.

Some of the possible alternatives pose operational challenges. For example, consumers believe that biodegradable bags are better, but they contaminate other plastics and diminish end-market revenue.

The 15 municipalities comprising the Northeast Avalon Joint Town Councils conducted a survey of retailers, and the results indicated that retailers within these municipalities support the ban on single-use plastic bags, but do they fully understand the alternatives?

### **Retail Council of Canada – Jim Cormier**



RCC represents the continuum of the retail sector from the small shops to the biggest market retailers. The retail sector is the largest private sector employer.

Since the initial report provided by the MMSB, RCC's position to maintain the status quo has changed. They brought their larger members together in an effort to try and come to a middle ground.

It was stated that the bigger retailers such as Walmart and Loblaws are having an impact with their fees and focus on reducing plastic bags; they use the fee they collect for reinvestment in environmental initiatives. It is more difficult for the smaller retailers to absorb costs.

RCC's key message is whatever action is taken has to be harmonized across the province to create a level playing field. If harmonization could occur across the Atlantic Provinces, this would be even more amenable e.g., could all of the provinces harmonize with PEI? (PEI'S approach is not the preferred one for the RCC from an administrative point, but at least it's province-wide).

If action were taken at the municipal level, it would be chaotic for retailers that have locations in numerous communities across the province.

RCC stated they are willing to accept several options including (in order of preference):

- Mandating that businesses have to establish plans for single-use plastic waste reduction
- Voluntary fees, with retailers controlling how collected fees are used
- Mandatory fees with retailers controlling how collected fees are used
- While not a top choice for the RCC, a plastic bag ban, as long as it is provincial, or even across the Atlantic Provinces, would be acceptable as harmonization is of the highest importance RCC

If a ban is implemented, retailers would need time to use up existing bag inventories.

RCC members are not necessarily in favor of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as some members will comply while others won't - this means some could use other's bans/fees to their competitive advantage.

RCC reiterated that harmonization is everything for its members. If NL wants to look at the PEI model, then RCC would be willing to entertain this and work with government.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association**

NEIA was unable to attend the meeting, but did send in a written comment. NEIA asked if actions in relation to reducing plastic bags create demand for alternatives, options for these alternatives to be produced within the province to help drive the local economy should be explored.

If paper bags are determined to be an alternative, this could create jobs and diversify the scope of business in NL's forestry industry. This should be discussed with the Forestry Industry Association.

## **5.0 Policy Toolkit: Options for Managing Single-Use Plastic Items – MMSB**

In the *Plastic Shopping Bag Management in Newfoundland and Labrador – Status and Options (Revised 2018)* report, several options for managing single-use shopping bags were outlined – ranging from voluntary strategies to regulatory policy instruments. MMSB briefly overviewed these options. It was noted that even though the report is recent, opinions, positions and attitudes have changed and new developments have occurred.

MMSB overviewed the cradle to grave life cycle of the single-use plastic bag - manufacturer, distributor, retailer, consumer, household and end-of-life disposal (reuse, recycle or trash).

One of the options not contained in the report is that of a public-private partnership – a voluntary agreement among stakeholders. This could be a partnership between government and private enterprises/industry with a reduction target.

*Across the country:*

EPR programs for packaging and paper have been adopted in a number of provinces.

Over the past year, a number of decisions surrounding the use of plastic bags have been implemented in provinces across Canada:

- City of Montreal - the first city in Canada to implement a distribution ban on bags as of January 1, 2018 (CPIA stated that the ban was on thin plastic bags).
- City of Victoria - effective July 2018, Victoria adopted a plastic bag distribution ban. Retailers can provide the consumer with a paper bag at a cost of 15 cents and a reusable bag for \$1. (CPIA noted that the Grocers association challenged this ban. While the Supreme Court concluded that the City had the authority to institute the ban, CPIA indicated that the decision will be back before the Supreme Court.)
- PEI – a Private Members Bill was passed for the reduction of plastic bags effective April 2018. Retailers can provide consumers with a paper bag at a cost of 15 cents and reusable bag for \$1.

## **6.0 Group Discussion – Goss Gilroy**

The main focus of this session was to hear participants' perspectives and opinions on the voluntary, regulatory and economic options to impact presence and management of single-use plastic items with a focus on plastic bags. Questions posed to the group included:

- What are the considerations for each option – e.g., human and financial resources, timelines to implement, potential for public support?
- What are the impacts of each option – societal, environmental, economic?
- If there are constraints, what are the solutions?
- Which options are most doable? Which make sense in consideration of all of the key factors?

The anticipated outcome would be to identify a number of options and then determine short term actions.

### **Status Quo**

- The status quo option is to landfill plastic bags.
- If the status quo is maintained, there needs to be a clearer definition of who “owns” and is responsible for collecting litter that ends up in ditches and drains.
- Regions would need to make investments in fencing at landfills; though regions cautioned the utility of fencing given wind speeds in NL.
- Public education is needed regarding how and why plastic bags end up in the environment.

### **Landfill Ban**

- Plastic bags are a challenging material to ban.
- Enforcement and reasonableness should be considered.
- Municipalities and regions could consider allowing shopping bags/kitchen catchers for curbside bin collection; this eliminates double bagging and reduces the number of plastic bags going to the landfill.
- A clearer understanding of household reuse and disposal practices in NL as it relates to plastic bags is needed. MMSB stated that, during its last waste audit of 100 NL homes, 40% of plastic shopping bags audited were reused – e.g., for collecting pet waste, for garbage bags. 60% were disposed of after a single use.
- A better understanding of the impact clear bag programs have had on the public’s behavior is needed. An understanding of whether the public will substitute shopping bags with kitchen catchers is needed.

### **Curbside Recycling**

- There is a need for continuous education and consistent messaging and reminders to manage consumer habits – allowing plastic bags in the blue bag would require significant increases to education efforts.
- Currently there are limited, if any, end markets for this waste stream.
- A recycling initiative may require mechanical upgrades to recycling facilities.
- Even with bag recycling, there will still be a lot of film going to the landfill.
- Plastic waste has the potential to contaminate other containers, reducing the quality of the material and potentially threatening end markets.
- Recycling still may not be an economical approach for the regions; this will reduce what goes into the landfill, but regions will need additional equipment and will still need fences and mitigation efforts.

- Some wondered if the public would feel that steps to reduce plastic shopping bags are disingenuous when there is a much broader plastics stream. Other stakeholders stated that this is a first step – plastics reduction needs to start somewhere.

### **EPR**

- If an EPR program for packaging and paper is established, responsibility needs to be clearly defined - producers and retailers are responsible for the systems. It has to be accompanied by well-thought out policy.
- Municipal systems can be inefficient and costly – industry risks having to pay for decisions they were not involved in.
- Small business owners will be absorbing a double fee – a cost required to implement a program and a disposal fee.
- There could be a requirement for funds collected through an EPR program to be directed to an education initiative designed to change consumer behavior.
- Coordination with the other Atlantic Provinces is one way to generate higher volumes of materials to increase efficiency.
- EPR will reduce plastics blowing from landfills but it still cannot get the littered or poorly managed plastic bag out of the tree.
- Online retailers do not pay and yet they contribute to the plastics problem. From a fairness perspective, they must be involved in addressing the issue.
- Depending on how the regulation is written, there is a risk of bags not being included in the EPR program.

### **Voluntary Return-to-Retail (R2R)**

- Accessibility is problematic, and so this is not currently a provincial solution.
- There are fluid numbers in the province in relation to R2R so the effectiveness is not known
- The potential could be there to incorporate other bags – e.g., dry-cleaning bags; bread bags.
- R2R is built on the backs of grocery stores and supermarkets. It is simple to bring bags back, and this is the appropriate place for the initiative rather than through the green depot system where depots (which are private businesses) would need to be compensated by industry to accept the material.
- Physical containment inside premises would be better for R2R. How often do the retailers check the receptacles?
- Retailers cannot be waste managers when it comes to contaminated material.
- Convenient access is critical. Awareness of where bags can be returned must be increased.
- R2R has to be voluntary.
- Who takes responsibility to educate and run this voluntary network?
- An EPR program specifically for plastic bags would likely end up being needed to run the network.

### **Voluntary Bag Fees**

- This option is achievable in theory but challenges exist in start-up. RCC members were considering this action in the last couple of years in Atlantic Canada, but competition among retailers makes it challenging (e.g., one sets a voluntary fee; competitor does not).
- Walmart's fee hasn't led to other large chains joining in; yet, it is important that they all undertake the initiative. Consider how they would come to an agreement.
- Retailers want to keep the fee to manage the program.
- An MOU or some mechanism to level the playing field would be needed.
- CPIA stated that supermarkets are the largest distributor of plastic bags, and their efforts have resulted in reduction.
- If two of the largest supermarkets were engaged, this would address the majority of plastic bag generation. Consider who would get them to the table.
- RCC cannot support a program that targets select members; any program would need to be province-wide / harmonized.

### **Provincial Bag Fees**

- Could significantly reduce the presence of plastic bags in the environment.
- Levels the playing field for retailers.
- Retailers want to keep the fees – most retailers with voluntary programs are directing the fees toward sustainability initiatives already.
- Retailers would not want to pay more for paper bags or alternatives.

### **Provincial Distribution Ban**

- RCC could agree with this approach, although it is not ideal, and it would have to be a harmonized provincial ban.
- The restaurant sector also would be impacted and would need to be consulted.
- Bans are a disincentive to changing behavior – they remove choice.
- Alternatives must be strongly considered. CPIA questioned whether a ban gets us to a better place environmentally. CPIA stated that reusable bags do not have a sufficient lifespan to be a viable alternative and paper is a more energy intensive alternative.

### **Public-Private Partnership Voluntary Agreement**

- In order for a partnership to be successful, stakeholders need to come to the table honestly. They need to share the same goal.
- Government would need a framework with a focus on the social, environmental and economic principles.
- The conversation would have to include decision makers from, for example, RCC, CFIB, CPIA.
- Any partnership committee would need to include the large department stores, as well as the grocery stores. It also would need to set guidelines and focus on voluntary action.

- Consider establishing a working group to develop a framework to go to government over the next 18 months; CPIA would be willing to take the lead on developing a framework.
- Consider whether industry will get together with other stakeholders to take identified action or if regulation will end up being required
- The ‘what’ could be an MOU and the ‘how’ could be up to retailers.

## **7.0 Considerations for moving forward**

- CPIA stated that the public is making decisions based on misinformation. It is time for stakeholders to show leadership and inform the public on the implications for them, society and the economy if a plastic ban were implemented. CPIA is willing to work with the parties in the room to come up with a process to address the plastic issue and protect the environment. They are willing to discuss a framework for alternative action.
- MNL reiterated that its members want a ban. They expressed frustration, noting that their discussions about addressing plastic bags started years ago. They were looking for action oriented deliverables from this session.
- CFIB questioned whether government knows how Newfoundlanders would respond to a plastic bag ban. If not, the organization asked if there is a way to find out.
- If a committee is established to determine action, MNL would like to be involved.
- Municipal Affairs and Environment noted that a successful outcome for the day would be coming together with actions the group could agree to as next steps. Most stakeholders agreed that there is a need to determine how the province’s residents would feel about a distribution ban and the potential consequences when presented with information regarding alternatives and the environmental footprint of these alternatives. An outreach tool and/or research specific to NL were discussed as ways to gauge the public. CPIA stated that there needs to be education to ensure people in the province know the implications of banning plastic bags before their opinion on a ban is sought.

### **Going forward:**

- A province-wide distribution ban is still of interest to some stakeholders as a long-term direction for addressing the presence and management of single-use plastic bags.
- A survey of residents should be carried out to gauge perspectives on a distribution ban of single-use plastic shopping bags and the implications for such a ban.
- A public-private committee of stakeholders should be established.
- The committee should provide information to the Minister on a potential framework for the management of single-use plastic bags in NL.
- The Committee should work within a six to nine-month timeline.