

REPORTING ON ENGAGEMENT

A. Achieving Public Engagement Objectives

Objectives	How was it achieved?
Determining what support systems may be needed	<p>Resident surveys looked at current shopping habits in order to determine what engagement techniques would best help their shopping habits change.</p> <p>Overall, it was found that 85% of residential respondents indicated they are prevented from using reusable bags more often because they forget their bags at home or in their car. Administration’s plan for reminder posters in the windows of participating retailers will go forward as a reminding technique for residents.</p>
Phase-in period timeline	<p>Business surveys asked businesses what their stock of plastic bags was and as such this question found that of the businesses that distribute bags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 42% of businesses ordered a stock of 0-3 months of bags at a time - 21% of businesses ordered a stock of 3 to 6 months at a time - 5% of business orders a stock of 6 to 9 months at a time - 32% of businesses ordered a stock of 9 to 12 months at a time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Of these businesses, only one respondent indicated they distribute over 500 bags per day. o All other respondents distribute between 1 and 100 bags per day. <p>Another question put to businesses was what phase-in timeline they would like to see and out of the businesses that distribute plastic bags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 42% of respondents indicating they prefer no phase-in or no ban at all. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Half of these indicated they disagree with the proposed ban o The other half of these did not indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposed ban - 5% of respondents indicating they prefer 0-3months - 11% of respondents indicating they prefer 3-6 months - 5% of respondent indicating they prefer 6-9 months - 37% of respondents indicating they prefer 9-12 months <p>Residents were also asked questions that gauged their shopping habits related to plastic bags and how often they used reusable bags or other alternatives. These questions were meant to determine if residents were already taking steps to not use plastic bags and it was found that 79% of respondents sometimes or always brought a reusable bag for shopping. Out of 439 responses, 397 indicated they brought reusable bags to grocery stores, and 209 reported bringing reusable bags to retail stores. Please note that</p>

	<p>the respondents were able to check off both options and this accounts for the number of answers not adding up to the number of total responses for the question.</p>
<p>Level of Understanding of Effects of Plastic Bags on the environment</p>	<p>Survey questions regarding understanding of the effects of plastic bags on the environment were left out to keep the survey short. It was further determined that this objective would be altered from “<u>determining</u> a level of understanding of effects of plastic bags on the environment” to “<u>establishing</u> a level of understanding of effects of plastic bags on the environment” which will be achieved through public education during phase two of this engagement plan once the bylaw has been passed.</p>
<p>Community Support</p>	<p>Both the resident and business surveys asked respondents what their support of the ban was.</p> <p>Business survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28% of respondents indicated they agree with the proposed ban - 20% of respondents somewhat agree - 14% of respondents somewhat disagree - 38% of respondents disagree <p>Resident survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 40% of respondents indicated they agree with the proposed ban - 26% of respondents indicated they somewhat agree with the proposed ban - 9% of respondents indicated they somewhat disagree with the proposed ban - 25% of respondents indicated they disagree with the proposed ban

B. Results and Responses

Resident Survey

How many people live in the household?

1-2	3-5	Over 6
279	185	18

Do you take or buy plastic bags offered to you at the checkout?

Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
85	239	132	24

How many plastic bags do you use per shopping trip?

0	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 10	Over 10
54	255	114	23	7

What do you do with the bags after using them?

Throw them out	Recycle them	Reuse them	Other
18	81	366	0

How often do you bring your reusable bags when shopping?

Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
141	228	68	45

What prevents you from using reusable bags more often?

Forget them	Don't own any	Prefer plastic	Other
370	13	23	32

Do you take reusable bags to:

Grocery Store	Retail store	Other
397	209	4

Have you ever used anything other than a reusable bag for purchases? Please list:

Cardboard box	Tote	Plastic box	Other
95	18	12	60

Do you purchase bulk garbage bags or dog waste bags?

Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
226	144	55	55

Overall, I agree that the City should ban plastic bags to reduce waste entering the landfill and environment.

Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
193	125	42	119

Business Survey

*There were 12 respondents who indicated they did not distribute plastic bags. As such, for some questions two sets of data are presented below to account for this. All other data from questions is from all respondents, including those that do not distribute plastic bags.

How many people does your business employ?

1 to 5	6 to 15	16 to 25	over 25
22	5	2	6

Does your business give out or sell plastic bags for any use?

Yes	No
23	12

Approximately how many checkout bags does your business distribute daily?

0	1 to 100	101-250	251-500	Over 500
12	15	1	1	3

Do customers bring in reusable bags?

Results from all Businesses

Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
0	12	9	14

Results from Businesses distributing plastic checkout bags

Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
0	7	7	9

What types of bags does your business distribute?

Plastic	Paper	Other
18	4	1

How many plastic checkout bags does your business order at a time?

0 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 9 months	9 months to 12 months
8	4	1	6

Does your business accept plastic bags for recycling?

Yes	No
9	26

Does your business sell reusable bags?

Yes	No
9	25

What are they typically made of?

Plastic	Cloth	Other
7	9	1

How long of a phase-in period would you like to see?

Results from all Businesses

No phase-in/no ban	0 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 9 months	9 to 12 months
10	8	3	1	8

Results from Businesses distributing plastic checkout bags

No phase-in/no ban	0 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 9 months	9 to 12 months
8	1	2	1	7

Would your business put a reminder poster, provided free by the City of Wetaskiwin, in the window of your business?

Results from all Businesses

Yes	No
23	12

Results from Businesses distributing plastic checkout bags

Yes	No
13	9

Overall, I agree that the City should ban plastic bags to reduce waste entering the landfill and environment.

Results from all Businesses

Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
8	6	4	11

Results from Businesses distributing plastic checkout bags

Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
3	3	3	11

C. Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, residents are currently more pre-disposed to take plastic checkout bags than not. However, 77% of respondents have indicated that they sometimes or almost never accept plastic bags at the checkout which indicates that residents have already started to form plastic-free shopping habits and may get into the habit of not using plastic checkout bags more and more. 5% of respondents indicated they never take the plastic bags offered to them at the checkout and a further 18% of respondents indicated they always accept the bags offered to them. Conversely, 29% and 47% of respondents indicated they always or sometimes, respectively, bring their reusable bag(s) shopping which again shows that residents are already making efforts to not use plastic. A further 38% reported using containers other than reusable bags for their purchases such as cardboard boxes when supplied by the store, totes, or plastic crates meant for purchases.

In asking residents what prevents them from using reusable bags more often, 85% of respondents indicated they forget their bags at home or in their vehicle. 3% indicated they didn't own any reusable bags, and 5% indicated they prefer plastic. A further 7% of respondents indicated they did not find reusable bags sanitary for food, especially meat, milk, and other leaky items. Some also indicated they take breaks from using their own bags to re-stock on plastic bags for their garbage. Others expressed that bringing their own bag was inconvenient.

These surveys' questions have shown that while residents are not bringing reusable bags or using alternatives to plastic bags more often than using plastic, they are starting to change their habits. The biggest block to residents using less plastic is that they forget bags or they prefer plastic bags for a variety of reasons. Phase two of the engagement plan will take these factors into consideration by taking a strong stance to remind residents to bring their bags or other reusable containers. The second phase of the engagement plan will also take into consideration a need to educate residents on washing and cleaning reusable bags and containers.

Responses also showed that while some residents depend on plastic checkout bags for their garbage bins and dog waste, 47% of respondents indicated they always purchase garbage bags or dog waste bags and 30% indicated they sometimes purchase garbage bags and dog waste bags. This data shows that the majority of people do not depend on plastic checkout bags for trash and dog waste.

Overall, 66% of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that the City should ban plastic checkout bags while the remaining 34% disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the proposed ban. Some respondents who disagreed, somewhat disagreed, or somewhat agreed also commented on the survey that they felt the City should be exploring other environmentally friendly initiatives instead of a ban or that they felt differently about different types of plastic bags. The survey has shown that there is support for the proposed ban but that there is room for more buy-in from residents. Phase two of the engagement plan will seek to educate residents on the effects of plastic bags on the environment and on alternatives for shopping.

Regarding the business response, 12 out of 35 respondents indicated they did not distribute plastic checkout bags at their businesses, and as such an additional set of data is provided above for some of the survey questions to illustrate how the 12 respondents affect the data. The survey asked businesses if they provide plastic bags as a way to determine if the business will be affected by the proposed plastic checkout bag ban. In conjunction with this question, businesses were also asked whether customers brought in their own bags. Out of the 12 respondents who do not provide bags, five respondents indicated customers sometimes or almost never bring in their own bags with the remaining seven respondents indicated customers never bring in their own bag. This data suggests that these businesses may not be greatly affected by the proposed ban since the business and the customer do not demonstrate a need for checkout bags.

Of the businesses that do provide bags to their customers, 30.5% of customers sometimes bring bags, as well as 30.5% who almost never bring bags, and 39% never bring bags. This data suggests, much like the residential data, that shoppers are slowly getting into the habit of bringing their own bags shopping.

The majority, at 78% of businesses reported they distributed plastic bags with 18% of businesses reporting they distribute paper bags and a further 4% of respondents reporting they distribute both paper and plastic bags. This data suggests that while there are some businesses that have moved away from plastic bags, they may have done so because they sell small items or that they use paper as a style choice for checkout bags and it may not be due to a green shift for the business. However, with the data available it is difficult to speculate.

As discussed in Section A, the largest concentration of respondents at 42% order a stock of 0-3 months of bags with the next largest concentration at 32% of those who order 9 to 12 months' worth of checkout bag stock at a time. The remaining 26% of respondents order between 3 and 9 months' worth of stock at once. This data is significant because it demonstrates that if there is a 6 month phase-in period put in place, once the phase-in is over, these businesses may still have some stock of their checkout bags left over.

These sentiments may be echoed in the preferred phase-in that businesses that distribute plastic bags indicated they would like to see. 42% of respondents indicated they would prefer no ban at all/no-phase in, 37% indicated a preferred period of 9-12 months, 5% a period of 6-9 months, 11% a period of 3-6 months, and 5% who preferred a period of 0-3 months. Furthermore, 70% of businesses who distribute plastic bags indicated they disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the ban and a further 30% of businesses indicating they agreed or somewhat agreed with the ban. Part of the hesitation to agree with the ban may stem from having a stockpile of bags that will not be used, however, it is difficult to speculate with the limited data available from the survey.

The survey further sought to determine if stores were already establishing their own environmental friendly initiatives by asking businesses if they accepted plastic bags for recycling and if businesses sold reusable bags. 26% of all respondents indicated they did accept plastic bags for recycling and a further 69% of businesses who distribute plastic bags indicated they sold reusable bags at their businesses. This data suggests that while stores are not comprehensively tackling the environmental concerns of plastic

bags, they are making efforts for consumers to use reusable bags instead of conventional single-use bags.

Moving forward, the second phase of the engagement plan will focus on public education and keeping residents and businesses informed of key dates and issues of plastic bags. The survey results have shown that there is minimal buy-in from businesses; with more buy-in from residents and that there is room to get more buy-in from both parties. The survey results have shown that there may be a need to develop resources for businesses on making the transition to being plastic bag free and these resources will become part of phase two of the engagement plan.

D. Lessons Learned from Public Engagement

1. Careful wording selection: The bag ban surveys that went out to residents and businesses implied that the single-use plastic bag ban was for checkout bags but was not explicit. Some residents wrote comments on paper copies of the surveys that asked what they were to do without garbage bags or that they support checkout bags being banned but not garbage bags. Had the survey been more explicit in describing a ban on single-use checkout bags, this may have altered the data.
 - a. Moving forward the Single-use plastic bag ban will be re-banded as the Plastic Checkout Bag Ban in order to combat any confusion.