

BUSINESS KIT

THE PLASTIC CHECKOUT BAG BYLAW



The Business Kit put together by the City of Wetaskiwin is intended to provide businesses with information on how the ban will affect them. The Kit provides businesses with key messages for customer inquiries, and give them a starting point if they decide to provide alternative bags to customers.

It is important for all businesses to know and understand how the Plastic Checkout Bag Bylaw affects them. Whether you are a restaurant owner, fast food chain manager, run a retail store, or have a stall at the farmer's market, you are affected by the bylaw.

What plastic bags are banned?

- Plastic checkout bags (new or used) under 2 mils or 0.05 millimetres thick have been banned, but plastic bags over this size are permitted as a reusable bag. The bylaw defines reusable containers as any container manufactured to hold at least 20lbs and is made of cloth or other machine washable fabric, durable plastic at least 2 mils or 0.05 millimetres thick, previously used cardboard boxes, or any other durable material.
- There is no minimum fee that retail establishments must charge for reusable containers; however, the retail establishment may opt to charge a fee to offset the increased cost of these reusable containers.
 - There is no requirement for retail establishments to sell or give out reusable containers if they do not wish to do so.

Exemptions to the plastic bag ban

- produce bags
- bags to carry fresh meat or fish, or to carry live fish,
- bags for bulk food items like loose candy, nuts fruit, and loose hardware items,
- plastic bags for freshly prepared bakery items or other food items like deli products
- bags used for wrapping fresh cut flowers or potted plants,
- dry-cleaning bags, or
- any other dirty, greasy, or hazardous materials like would sully or dirty their immediate environment.

Paper bags

Retail establishments may choose to supply paper checkout bags to customers but may only sell or give a paper bag if the customer requests one first. This is to encourage shoppers to bring and use their own reusable bag.

After June 1, 2020, retail establishments will be required to charge a minimum of \$0.15 per paper bag. This will off-set the retailers' costs while encouraging consumers to bring their reusable bags to the store. The retailer may also choose to sell paper bags for a fee prior to June 1, 2020 if desired.

Note:

Drive-thru's, food delivery, mobile catering, and take-out restaurants will be exempt from the \$0.15 paper bag fee once it comes into force.

Enforcement

City bylaw officers won't be going door to door to inspect stores on a regular basis but will only do so if they suspect - or have received a complaint about - a retail establishment supplying a prohibited plastic bag, or providing paper bags without prior demand by a customer.

In the event that an offense under the bylaw has been committed, the bylaw officer will present the business owner with a verbal warning. If another offense occurs after a verbal warning has been issued, the bylaw officer will fine the business. If the ticket is paid within 7 days, then the fine is discounted by 50%.

Second-hand Stores

The bylaw does not apply to non-profits, and this provision affects second hand stores. If a second hand store is a non-profit, it may continue to distribute plastic bags as they do. If the second hand store is a for-profit then it must comply with the bag ban.

QUESTIONS THAT CUSTOMERS MAY ASK

1. **Why can't I get a free plastic bag anymore?**

As of July 9, 2019 the City of Wetaskiwin has banned all plastic checkout bags less than 2 mils or 0.05 millimeters thick and all retail stores and establishments in the City must comply with the bylaw.

2. **Why can I still get a produce bag? A bag for my bulk food?**

Under the bylaw passed by City Council, produce bags and other 'hygienic' bags are still permitted because they provide an immediate barrier between things like food and the outside environment or they keep dirty, greasy, or other messy items from contaminating their surroundings. Checkout bags are primarily used for carrying purchases, not for keeping purchases or food clean.

3. **When does the ban come into effect?**

The plastic bag ban comes into effect on July 9, 2019. On June 1, 2020 stores will be required to charge a minimum of \$0.15 on paper bags, which is kept by the store to offset the cost of purchasing the paper bag.

4. **What difference will the ban make?**

The ban will drastically reduce the number of plastic bags going to the landfill and entering the environment.

5. **I didn't bring enough reusable bags, what do I do?**

Our store has reusable bags available for purchase. Alternatively, you may wheel your shopping cart to your vehicle and load your purchase directly into your vehicle from your shopping cart.

6. **Why do I have to pay for a reusable bag?**

Reusable bags cost more to produce and purchase but are designed to last for years. If thicker reusable bags were used at the same frequency as regular checkout bags the environmental impact would be much more serious.

7. **Can I recycle my reusable bags?**

Some reusable bags are fully recyclable at the Wetaskiwin recycling facility. Look for the recycling symbol on the bag. The City recycling Centre accepts #1, #2, and #5 plastics.

8. **What do I use to pick up after my pet?**

Many stores sell pet waste bags for a small price. Pet waste bags are not banned under the Plastic Checkout Bag bylaw.

9. **What do I use for garbage bags?**

Residents are still able to buy bulk garbage bags which cost on average \$0.14 per bag. These bags are larger than regular checkout bags and can hold more waste.

CHOOSING A REUSABLE BAG

On the fence about what type of reusable bag to sell or give out to customers?

We've outlined some options below:

1. **Natural fiber bags:** Made of canvas, cotton, and jute bags.

Pros: Can last for years, degradable, and easy for the customer to wash.

Cons: Expensive and non-recyclable, these bags have a higher carbon footprint.

2. **Polyethylene bags:** Made of #1 or #4 thick plastic.

Pros: Cheap to buy and have a low carbon footprint.

Cons: Not long lasting and typically made for several uses. These bags are not recyclable at City facilities, and residents may only reuse them as garbage bags.

3. **Polypropylene bags:** Woven or unwoven.

Pros: Cheap to buy, low carbon footprint, and last for many uses. Some of these bags may be recyclable plastic #5, be sure to check with the supplier.

Cons: May not be as durable as other types of bags.

4. **PET Plastic bags:** made from recycled bottles .

Pros: Long-lasting, lower carbon footprint when using recycled material. Some PET bags may be recycled, so be sure to check with the supplier.

Cons: Expensive and difficult for the customer to wash.

5. **Plastic tubs, crates, or grocery boxes:**

Pros: Recyclable, can last for years, durable, and easy for the customer to wash.

Cons: Expensive and may be more difficult to find a supplier.

Overall, bags and containers made with recycled content have a decreased carbon footprint associated with their production. Bags with large amounts of printing or decoration also have a higher carbon footprint.

**Not sure if your bag or container can be recycled in Wetaskiwin?
The City of Wetaskiwin Recycling Centre accepts #1, #2, #5 plastics.**

If you have any questions regarding this Business Kit or the Plastic Checkout Bag Bylaw, please visit our website www.wetaskiwin.ca, call 780-361-4420, or email us at cityclerk@wetaskiwin.ca