

NEWS

# Majority of businesses support plastic bag ban: survey



David Hickey is putting forward a motion to ban plastic bags in Saint John.  
Photo: Submitted

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**Kevin Martine | Telegraph-Journal**

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A majority of Saint John area businesses support a bylaw banning the use of plastic bags, according to a new survey. Now a city councillor may turn that support into an actual

bylaw.

“Our community’s commitment to reducing plastic waste starts here, and this motion is a commitment that council is focused on putting together the pieces on our long-term climate change strategy,” said Ward 3 Coun. David Hickey, who plans to put a motion forward for a ban as early as Monday's council meeting.

A plastic bag ban has already come into effect in Moncton, Riverview and Dieppe as of Oct. 1, after a three-month delay due to COVID-19. Prince Edward Island issued a province-wide ban on plastic shopping bags in July 2019, while Nova Scotia recently implemented its own province-wide ban on Oct. 30.

A total of 75 per cent of surveyed Saint John businesses supported a plastic checkout bag ban, according to the results of a recent survey, which was conducted by the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce and the Fundy Regional Service Commission.

About 18 per cent of surveyed businesses said they opposed the bylaw

“Our local businesses, they’re ready for it,” said Brenda MacCallum, a spokesperson for the Fundy Regional Service Commission. MacCallum said eliminating plastic bag use would save the commission \$72,000 per year and potentially save 35 million plastic bags from the landfill. The commission stopped recycling plastic bags in March.

MacCallum said the commission wants all the municipalities in its coverage area to enact a bylaw.

According to the results of the survey, 63 per cent of surveyed businesses said the ban would have little to no impact on their business, while another 23 per cent said it would have only minor costs. Another 10 per cent said it would have a significant impact on their business.

Most of the survey respondents were small businesses with fewer than five employees, according to the commission. Roughly two-thirds of the businesses were located in Saint John, with smaller numbers in Rothesay, Quispamsis, Grand Bay-Westfield, St. Martins and Hampton.

Between 50 and 60 businesses participated in the survey, mostly retail businesses, according to David Duplisea, CEO of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce.

A majority of surveyed businesses also said plastic bags are not needed during the pandemic.

Duplisea said the proposed bylaw would bring Saint John in line with other cities in Atlantic Canada, such as Moncton and Halifax. He said the survey results show businesses understand the environmental issue.

“They recognize that the time has come to start taking a little bit of proactive action on climate change initiatives, and this is the first step,” he said.

Duplisea said some shops were already removing plastic bags voluntarily, and that requiring all businesses to do so would reduce competitive pressures on those businesses.

“This just levels the playing field for everyone,” he said.

Most of the costs involved for businesses who are opposed to the change would likely be passed onto the consumer, he added, by requiring them to bring a re-usable bag or by charging a fee for paper bags.

“It’s a forward thinking motion,” Duplisea said.

Hickey said he believes his motion will pass at city council. A previous motion last year to ban single-use plastics was referred to the regional commission

“I’m confident in its ability to pass,” Hickey said. "Certainly, I do suspect some opposition from folks around the table, but if we reflect on the last conversation we had at council, the conversation was consistent in council being largely supportive.”

- *With files from Emma McPhee*

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**Vicki\_Willis\_** 1 day ago

We have always used plastic grocery bags for household waste. Now we will have to buy bags so there doesn't seem to be a lot saved in plastic waste. My question - can we just throw out the garbage loose in the barrels like we did years ago? RonW.

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**Raymond\_Bungay\_** 2 days ago

Will not affect us as started using reusable bags around 2007. We buy plastic bags designed for small garbage bags. High time they get the boot.

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