



Shelburne Post Office - Box 686
131 First Avenue East
Shelburne, Ontario L9V 3M1
www.monomulumur.com
info@monomulumur.com

The Honourable Catherine McKenna

October 26, 2019

Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Environment and Climate Change Canada
200 Sacre-Coeur Boulevard
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3

Re: An urgent appeal for speedy and concrete measures on policies, guidelines, and regulations for plastic pollution, waste, re-cycling and reduction of plastic production.

Dear Minister McKenna,

I am writing to you on behalf of the citizens of Dufferin County in Ontario, through the Mono Mulumur Citizens' Coalition (MC²) and additionally citizens from our surrounding communities such as Caledon, Erin, Alliston and Creemore. My name is Arnold De Graaff and I am the chair person of the Environment Committee of MC². Many citizens in our area are keen to do their part. They also realize how much more is needed to make a difference.

We just held a public community meeting in Orangeville (on October 26, 2019) on **Plastic Pollution and Human Health** with presenters from Sick Kids Hospital and the University of Toronto. (See attached flyer). The present research on the effect of plastic pollution on our health is disconcerting particularly for our children and their endocrine systems. There are many reports of more plastics in our bodies, urine, feces and blood. As well, plastics are increasingly in our food, our water, our air and our soil. They are pervasive in our cars, homes, furniture, carpets, toys and countless other products.

We urgently appeal to you to take more drastic measures on plastic pollution as many other organizations have been requesting. Last year (June 7, 2018) your department received a report from EcoJustice, *Towards a Zero Plastic Waste Canada*, as well as the report commissioned by your own department: *Canada recycles just 9 per cent of its plastics*, supported by the Recycling Council of Ontario. These reports, some of them signed by 40 citizens' organizations and many others like this report, highlight the seriousness of the plastic pollution problem and what needs to be done during the coming years.

Although the issues are complex, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) has been dealing with various aspects of this problem for over 10 years. They committed themselves to develop strategies to a *Canadian-Wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility* with updates in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019. There was also a report on *A Canada-Wide Strategy for sustainable Packaging* (32 pp, 2009) which was to include **fees, targets, data collection, education, re-cycling and reduction guidelines**. Although promised for earlier this year, we still have not seen any concrete results.

The delay makes us wonder about the various 'stakeholders' that are mentioned in the reports. There is no transparency or clarity in this regard. If it is anything close to what they did in Europe, then we know that it is the plastic producers and oil companies that are holding up progress by lobbying, protesting, denying, diverting etc. Why would it not be the same here? (See: *The Intercept, Waste Only-How the Plastic Industry is Fighting to Keep Polluting The World*. July 20, 2019.) It is baffling how these industries could ever be considered collaborative 'stakeholders'?

While the *European Commission* was busy formulating binding government regulations for the plastic packaging and re-cycling industries, the plastic industry and corporate consumers of plastic (Nestle, Coca Cola etc.) invested a lot of money and effort on popular litter clean-up groups and efforts. The purpose of these initiatives, seem primarily designed to distract from the larger problems of increased plastic production, plastic pollution and weak regulations. See efforts such as: "Nederland Schoon", "Hold Norge rent", "Mooimakers", "Keep Baltic Tidy", "Keep America Beautiful" and many other similar programs, sponsored by The Plastic Industry Association and other corporations. These litter clean-up programs are only a fraction of the answer. It suggests an image of one truckload of litter collected on one side of a community's beach, while on the other side 2 truckloads of plastic waste are dumped into the ocean with more and more trucks lined up because of the increased production and use of plastics.

Industries were repeatedly invited to offer suggestions and set timelines and goals for incorporation into the final report. They refused to do so. Instead they spent millions of dollars for lobbying against the planned regulations. *The Corporate European Observatory* has provided us with some very detailed reports on the industry's opposition and lobbying efforts. The industry representatives and lobbyists had free access to the committee and members of parliament. In spite of the standing invitation to openly collaborate, they refused to do so. As a result of this evidence of the industry's practices, they lost a lot of goodwill and trust, much like the tobacco, fossil fuel, pharmaceutical, chemical and agricultural industries. The issue is not "Science vs. Emotions" as one of the industry's articles claimed, but "science and government policies in the service of the plastic industry".

In 2018 The European parliament, after much opposition and some changes adopted the European Commissions' report titled: *A European Strategy for Plastics in a circular Economy* (2018). Several other articles by *Euroactive* further elaborate on the European Parliament's viewpoint and binding decisions, e.g.: *"Single use plastics in the Commission crosshairs"*,

“Injecting responsibility into re-cycling”, “Drink giants rail against EU bottle cap plan”, and many others. It is hard to imagine Canada will not encounter the same opposition, lobbying and obstruction and court challenges as the European Commission and Parliament had to cope with since many of the same large companies are involved here in Canada. How much do the plastics and packaging companies already have free access to the government and a fundamental say in the policies being developed?

Recently the federal government published the: *“Charlevoix Blueprint for healthy oceans, seas and resilient coastal communities”*. (2018), which echoes the excellent report by the Environmental Law Centre, University of Victoria titled: *Seven reforms to address Marine Plastic Pollution* (2017). It also highlights the government’s efforts to *Extend Producer Responsibility for Packaging* (pp.32-36). These reports are in stark contrast to the rather lame responses by the plastics industry. See: Centre for International Environmental Law: *Fueling Plastics: Plastic Industry Awareness of Ocean Plastics Problem* (one of a series of three reports 2017). See further: *“Key elements of Extended Producer Responsibility and Product Stewardship Programs in Canada”* (2009); *“A Canada-wide Strategy for Sustainable Packaging”*; *“Progress report on extended producer responsibility released”* (2014); and *“Strategy on zero plastic waste”* (2018); *“Canada-Wide Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste-Phase 1”* (2019).

The Ontario government has published its own intentions and plans with regard to plastic and waste: *“Strategies for a Wastefree Ontario”* (2009); *“Resource recovery and circular economy act 2016 new producer responsibility framework”* (2016); *“Ontario’s Climate Change Action Plan, (2016);* and *“Ontario’s Climate Action: from plan to progress”* (2017). On paper the proposals seem like good plans, but given the current conservative government any present policies or proposed legislation can be postponed or reversed if it is in the interest of industry and government. A recent report by Environmental Defense (2019) called: *“Failure to Launch: a progress Report on Ontario’s Climate Change Actions,”* shows how little the ‘Made-in-Ontario’ climate actions have accomplished. In spite of the propaganda on its website, it seems very likely Ontario won’t meet its own targets and deadlines on reducing GHG emissions by 2030.

Conclusion

We have read many articles and reports and it has become clear to us that recycling is not the solution, nor is plastic-to-energy, nor banning single use plastics, nor truly eco-friendly disposable packaging. Although they each have their merits, by themselves they cannot stem the tide of the increase in plastic production. As many are advocating, we need an international treaty to solve the problem at its source. Canada could play a leading role in bringing about such an international treaty.

(See: World Economic Forum: *“The New Plastic Economy: Rethinking the Future”* (January 2018); The Conversation, *“We need a legally binding treaty to make plastic pollution history”* (March 18, 2019); *“Why a global treaty is needed to tackle our plastic problem”* by Lily Fuhr, head of Ecology and Sustainable Development, Heinrich Boll Foundation (May 23, 2017).

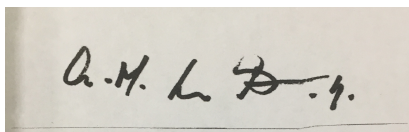
With a 40 percent projected increase in plastic production in the coming ten years, the problem of plastic pollution will only get worse, perhaps for decades to come. New investments of at least 180 billion dollars by the oil and plastic industries lock the plastic industry and investors into an ever expanding production of plastic. Without strong binding global legislation there seems no solution to ending the problem of plastic pollution. It is soon becoming the second global crisis together with the climate emergency. It underscores the urgency of the present situation.

(See: Global Citizen, "Plastic production is set to increase by 40 % over the next decade, experts say." by Daniele Sewlby, December 26, 2017; The Guardian, "180 bn investment in plastic factories feeds global packaging binge." (by Matthew Taylor, Dec. 26, 2017.)

We look to the Canadian government and the provinces to take courageous steps nationally and internationally. At the local level we will continue to educate and urge each citizen to make the changes needed in our life style from taking our own durable bags, our own coffee cups, jars etc. etc. And to keep asking ourselves, "What can I replace that with?" or, "Can I do without that?" and so on. Convenience is not a price worth paying for global plastic pollution which is endangering our environment and the health of our children. As soon as our local Mono Council announced it was going to ban plastic bags and other single use items in 2021, they were approached by a representative of the plastic industry. We strongly urged them not to talk to them as they have forfeited our trust like the tobacco, chemical, pharmaceutical and industrial agriculture industries.

We want you to seriously consider our appeal. We do not need more consultations. The research and actions we need to take are abundantly clear.

Sincerely yours,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored piece of paper. The signature appears to be "A. M. L. D. G." followed by a stylized flourish.

On Behalf of All the Citizens' that have signed this petition
Dr. Arnold De Graaff, Chair of the Environment Committee
Mono Mulmur Citizens' Coaliton

cc. The Honourable Jeff Yurek,
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Government of Ontario