

Valerie Patreau

Chair, Commission sur l'eau, l'environnement, le développement durable et les grands parcs  
543, chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine

Jan. 17, 2020

Dear Ms. Patreau,

I am writing you both as my city councillor, and as the chair of the *Commission sur l'eau, l'environnement, le développement durable et les grands parcs*, with the request to bring this "memoire" to the commission as part of the public consultation on the *Plan directeur de gestion des matières résiduelles 2020-2025*.

I am a long time resident of Montreal, and a teacher.

My students are young adults, the vast majority of whom recognize our current environmental problems as a crisis. In my classes, they talk about the importance of making individual decisions that will reduce their carbon footprints. Many of them try to eat less meat, use public transportation, buy second hand clothes. They put their plastic bottles in the recycling bin.

However, a look at the numbers shows that individual effort will never have enough impact. Collective action on a large scale is needed to avert catastrophe, and it is through politics that collective action is organized and enforced. In other words, we need our politicians to make changes to our systems of consumption.

So far, national and provincial governments have not shown environmental leadership. Phasing out plastic straws is a good thing, but when I look at the sheer number of plastic bottles, bags, boxes, and wrappers in my own house, I am aghast.

I realize that the municipal government cannot simply outlaw plastic. We live in a global system of production and distribution, and many of the products we buy are delivered to us in plastic containers.

At the same time, municipal governments are the ones stuck with cleaning up the plastic. It is municipal governments who have to organize the collection of recyclable material, picking it up from the kerbs, carting it to sorting and recycling facilities, finding buyers for used plastic. And municipal governments are also the ones responsible for getting any non-recycled plastic material to the landfill. It seems to me that municipal governments are uniquely placed to press for change when it comes to what we have come to accept as "disposable."

My proposal is a modest one, easy to put into practice.

As a corollary of its "master plan for residual materials management" and part of the city's long-term goal of "zero waste" I would like the government of the City of Montreal to:

1. adopt the following petition as its own (amended as deemed fit)
2. contact city governments around the country, and around the world, and ask them to sign the petition in the name of the people living in their cities
3. In a public forum, present the petition and signatures directly to the ten greatest plastic polluters in the world (Coca-Cola; PepsiCo; Nestlé; Danone; Mondelez International; Procter & Gamble; Unilever; Perfetti van Melle; Mars Incorporated; Colgate-Palmolive)
4. Present the petition and signatures to the Prime Minister of Canada
5. Present the petition and signatures to the World Trade Organization.

I thank the members of the commission for taking the time to read my proposal.

Sincerely,

Heidi Quinsey



When plastic bottles are thrown into the recycling bin or garbage they are usually perfectly good containers.

They have to be discarded because we have no more use for them.

And companies will produce more of them, which we will buy and then throw out or recycle, and this will happen over and over again, wasting resources and causing catastrophic levels of pollution.

**But.....**

What if every container was identical and built to last? What if all bottles came in standard sizes, colours and shapes?

Then, companies could just reuse them.



Instead of producing their own distinctive bottles every company could simply purchase the bottles back from the city that had collected the used ones.

*This would not require any new technology.*

*The products themselves would stay the same.*

*The distribution system would stay the same.*

*We already have recycling pickup.*

It would require so little to make this change – but citizens and consumers can't do it alone. We need our politicians to show some backbone and outlaw single use plastic. We need the corporate world to show they care more about the planet than about the shapes of the bottles they use.

90% of plastic in Canada and the world is not recycled. Clearly, recycling is not working.

Let's phase out single-use plastic and introduce mandatory, standard, reusable containers.