

Press Release
from the
Office of the Mayor

September 16, 2010

Sioux Lookout Council Votes to Ban Plastic Bags

At its September 15th meeting, Sioux Lookout Municipal Council voted five-to-two to give third and final reading and pass By-Law No. 20-10, *Being a By-Law to Prohibit the Sale or Free Distribution of Plastic Bags Within the Municipality of Sioux Lookout.*

The decision is the culmination of many months of public debate and Council deliberation on the issue. The plastic bag ban initiative was spearheaded by the Municipality's Environment Committee, and its Chair, Anne Saltel, stated following the adoption of the By-Law, "We are very pleased that Council has taken a leadership position on climate change; this is an important first step – and a realistic first step to take at the local level – in addressing the myriad of factors that contribute to environmental degradation, and the Environment Committee commends Council on their decision."

The intent of the By-Law includes:

- Helping to stem the large portion of plastic bags that find their way into the local landfill site after distribution;
- Reducing the distribution and use of plastic bags to promote environmental and financial benefits, including decreasing the amount of litter found throughout the Municipality and protecting storm sewers from blockages from plastic bags.

The By-Law defines plastic bags as, "a bag made of plastic film, including biodegradable or compostable bags, provided by a Retail Business to a customer at the till or point of sale to carry customer purchases from the Retail Business." Equally important in the definition of plastic bag is the description of what does not constitute a plastic bag, including, bags used for bulk purchases (e.g. for produce, small hardware supplies), meat, frozen foods, prepared foods, newspapers, laundry dry cleaning, minnows, and bags sold in packages containing multiple bags intended for such uses as garbage, recycling, pet and yard waste.

Commenting on the By-Law, Mayor Kathy Poling noted, "Conservative estimates on the amount of plastic bags distributed in our community each year is between 750,000 and 1 million. This is a staggering number. The step we are taking may be small but it is often grassroots local initiatives that can have the greatest impact."

Council has instructed a one-year phase-in period, effective upon the approval of the Set Fines by the Attorney General, which will give the community time to adjust to and prepare for the change.

Sioux Lookout is the first Municipality in Ontario to take the step to ban the sale or free distribution of plastic bags.

To obtain a copy of the By-Law or for more information, contact Linda Spence, Deputy Clerk at (807) 737-2700, ext. 2209 or deputyclerk@siouxlookout.ca.

