

Nova Scotia Plastic Bag Ban Questions and Answers

What is the purpose of the Plastic Bags Reduction Act?

The intent of the Plastic Bags Reduction Act is to reduce waste by cutting back on the amount of plastic used by consumers. Plastic shopping bags are an environmental problem when they are not collected for recycling. It's estimated that the average Nova Scotian uses 450 shopping bags per year and a great number of them end up in a landfill.

Up to 3% of Nova Scotia's litter is plastic shopping bags which pose a risk to wildlife and take many, many years to decompose.

After October 30, 2020, will businesses still provide plastic bags at checkouts?

Starting October 30, 2020, businesses will not be permitted to distribute plastic bags at checkouts.

Are there exemptions under the act for plastic bags to be used in specific circumstances?

Yes, plastic bags are permitted if used for:

- packaging loose bulk items such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains or candy
- packaging loose small hardware items such as nails or nuts and bolts
- containing or wrapping frozen foods, meat, poultry or fish, whether pre-packaged or not
- wrapping flowers or potted plants
- protecting prepared foods or bakery goods that are not pre-packaged
- containing prescription drugs received from a pharmacy
- transporting live fish
- transporting a large item that cannot easily fit in a reusable bag
- protecting clothes after professional laundering or dry cleaning
- packaging medical supplies and items used in the provision of health services
- protecting tires that cannot easily fit in a reusable bag

Does the Plastic Bags Reduction Act only apply to grocery stores?

No. The Act applies to all Nova Scotian businesses, such as grocery stores, restaurants, convenience stores, clothing stores – and the list goes on.

What type of checkout bags will be available?

After October 30, 2020, businesses will only be allowed to offer customers paper or reusable bags at their checkouts. Compostable or biodegradable plastic bags are not permitted. Residents are encouraged to use reusable bags. Lots of different types are available.

Why aren't biodegradable or compostable bags allowed?

Biodegradable and compostable bags contaminate existing recycling streams and don't decompose in compost facilities in Nova Scotia, including the Community Recycling Centre.

Do businesses have to provide a bag to customers?

No. Businesses do not have to offer any alternatives. Businesses can choose to offer paper and reusable bags for a fee or no fee- it's up to them.

Are businesses required to charge a fee for paper bags or reusable bags?

No. Some businesses may choose to charge a fee, and they're allowed to do that if they want to.

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What is done with the fee if a business charges for paper or reusable bags?

Some businesses may choose to charge a fee, and if they do, they can decide what they want to do with the money.

Can I bring my own bags?

Yes. You are encouraged can bring your own reusable bags.

Is the Province planning to ban other single-use items, such as foam containers and drinking straws?

For now, the focus is on plastic bags. However, the Act gives the option to regulate other single use items in the future.

Can I still recycle plastic bags?

Yes, put them in your blue bag. Other film plastic such as cereal bags, cracker bags, bread bags, and carrot bags can also be put in your blue bag. Contact the Community Recycling Centre at (902) 543-2991 or visit www.communityrecycling.ca for sorting information.

I use a plastic shopping bag to line my garbage bins. What will I do now?

You can still buy small and large garbage bags in stores.

Will businesses be permitted to sell garbage bags and dog poop bags?

Yes. Businesses can still sell garbage bags, pet waste bags, sandwich and freezer bags, etc.

Are there requirements for paper bags?

No. There are no requirements. However, it is recommended that businesses distribute paper bags that contain at least 40% of post consumer recycled paper content.