



YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE.
A TURTLE DOES NOT.

Image from: MEDASSET

Let's Ban Plastic Bags!

How to make the ocean and its creatures safer for future generations

The ocean covers over 70% of the Earth's surface and the tiny creatures that live there produce over 50% of Earth's oxygen. We, as human beings, need the ocean for many reasons including: food, tourism, travel, jobs, storm protection, nutrients, medicine, and much more. The problem is that plastic in the ocean is harming many animals. In order to make the oceans a safer place for these animals and ourselves, plastic bags should be banned in Canada, as they have been in other countries.

The problems with plastic bags:

- Sea turtles eat them by mistake because they look like jellyfish. Then they starve or suffocate, and slowly die.
- They do not biodegrade (naturally break down) in the ocean. Instead they become numerous very tiny pieces which are swallowed by animals such as fish.
- In addition, they leach chemicals into the oceans, which could have toxic effects on many creatures and humans that eat them.



Image from: WWF Canada

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Image from: www.forcesofgeek.com

How do plastic bags end up in our oceans?

- Simply put: they fly there. Plastic bags easily drift in the breeze towards the rivers, lakes, storm drains etc that carry them into the larger oceans.

Stray bags often float away from people, usually unintentionally. However, they don't go chasing after them. Plastic bags have become a man-made tumbleweed in urban communities and many people do not think to pick them up.



Image from: Ocean Conservancy



Image from: www.mobilepaddler.blogspot.com



Images from: www.banthebagspdx.com

The solution to plastic bags: **stop using them.**

Here's how Ireland did it: the government of Ireland managed to implement a plastic bag tax in 2002 and achieved a 90% reduction in plastic bag usage, with overwhelming support from the public and retailers. Their steps included:

1. Consulting with industries, who then supported the decision, and joined forces with the government.
2. Charging consumers a manageable €0.15 tax per plastic bag (about \$0.20 CAD).
3. Being upfront about collecting the tax for an Environment Fund that uses the money for environmental initiatives.
4. Educating the public to increase awareness on the dangers of plastic to the environment.

In conclusion, the tax worked because it was reasonable and it had consumer and industry acceptance. This is something that Canada could do too. So what are we waiting for? Let's ban plastic bags together!



Image from: Plastic Free Seas

References

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