

## Plastic Shopping Bags and Litter

- Plastic bags are NOT a major component of litter.
- In fact, audit studies in urban GTA communities (City of Toronto, York Region, Durham and Peel Regions) show retail plastic bags account for less than 1 per cent of litter. (Reference: The City of Toronto Streets Litter Audit 2004, MGM Management, 2004; Region of Peel Litter Survey 2003, MGM Management, 2003; The Regional Municipality of York 2003 Litter Survey, MGM Management, 2003; Regional Municipality of Durham Litter Survey 2003, MGM Management, 2003).
- A 2003 litter audit in Peel Region found that of 4,363 large litter items, only 3 were plastic shopping bags (.07%).
- The findings were similar in the City of Toronto, Durham Region and York Region.
- In the City of Toronto, of 5,243 large items found in their 2004 streets litter audit, only 11 plastic shopping bags were found (.2%) while miscellaneous paper items (eg. napkins, cardboard, paperboard) made up about 26 per cent of the items counted.
- In Durham Region, in their audit conducted the same year, 5,698 large items were counted and they found only 18 plastic shopping bags (.3%).
- And in York Region, their litter audit found 8,678 large items of which only 34 were plastic shopping bags (.4%).
- Data compiled by the Ocean Conservancy, Office of Pollution Prevention and Monitoring, shows in its global database that in Canada, cigarettes, food wrappers, and caps and lids account for over half of all the debris items collected ... all bags (including bags of all types) account for less than 5 per cent of debris items. (Reference: International Coastal Cleanup – 2003 – Canada Summary Report, The Ocean Conservancy, 2004)
- Littering is a people problem, not a packaging problem.
- Even if plastic bags were replaced with another product, littering would continue. That is why the industry encourages not only responsible use, but responsible disposal.
- This is a problem that affects all of us and we all have to be part of the solution. Consumer education is the only way to tackle litter with the

message that we can do better as a society. And the CPIA assists this effort with anti-litter information and programs on its website. The educational resources include school programs, incorporating an anti-litter calendar and anti-litter games, including a litterless lunch game for kids. CPIA's anti-litter website ([www.cpia.ca/anti-litter](http://www.cpia.ca/anti-litter)) had 136,000 page views in 2004.

- The plastics industry plays a leading role in combating litter: in Canada, the Environment and Plastics Industry Council (EPIC) is both a financial contributor and sponsor of the annual Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup.