



How can municipal governments help play a role in reducing microplastics in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River?

Supported by: Andrea Densham, Shedd Aquarium; Peter Brown, Parry Sound ON Dominique Monchamp, AquaHacking Senior Advisor and Sarah Winterton, World Wildlife Fund Canada Director; Mayor Walter Sendzik; St. Catharines, ON.

First, the group discussed our community understanding of microplastics.

Those at the session shared their own experiences in their community on microplastic issues and organizations, start-ups, campaigns in their communities that are doing research and coming up with creative solutions.

We learned that many of these communities have common experiences and some have explored solutions which they are eager to share with others, such as how some municipalities have written successful resolutions on banning single-use plastics, like St. Catharines. Mayor Sendzik discussed how St. Catharines successfully banned plastic straws, encouraged business and academic communities to follow the ban. The government must take on the initiative, and the community can see the vision and direction and follow.

Other initiatives were discussed, such as Georgian Bay Forever, a University of Toronto study that installs filters in laundry machines (a source of microplastic fibre shredding) to research and learn more about microplastic sources and in our laundry wastewater. A few organizations and campaigns focused on removing plastic from shorelines, such as Nature Sans Plastic, Milwaukee RiverKeeper, and WWF in collaboration with Oceanwise.

The group then considered opportunities for what we can do as a group and in our own communities to tackle the microplastics problem.

A common theme shared by everyone at the session was the need for more research and data on microplastics sources and consequences, and to share findings with the other communities. Also, the group discussed the importance of more opportunities for public outreach and education on microplastics in communities. Another theme was how to incentivize businesses that produce and use plastics to become more sustainable. Complete bans can be effective, such as banning plastic cups and straws at public events and banning vendors from selling plastics, but also encouraging businesses to produce and sell sustainable alternatives that consumers can purchase and use instead. The group also showed support for initiatives that organize cleanups of plastics on shorelines, as it encourages public education and engagement, as well as peer-to-



peer networking and mentoring. The group also discussed the importance of working with neighbouring communities and partners if your municipality doesn't have the resources.

Next steps: the group showed a lot of interest in starting an informal email group to share ideas and brainstorm. If anyone else would like to join, please contact Sarah Rang: sarah.rang@glslcities.org