

## Reducing Our Use of Plastic

The concept that plastic could be recycled arose after the first Earth Day in 1970 when participants in the Great Clean-Up saw how much of their rubbish was composed of plastic.

It was the plastic-producing companies themselves who were the first advocates of plastic recycling.

Faced with criticism from consumers, plastic-producing companies foresaw that the public would accept to buy products in plastic containers if it were told that the containers could be recycled. The strategy was successful.

The plastic-producing companies never accepted the responsibility of doing the recycling. It is governments, mostly municipal, which have accepted this costly and often futile responsibility. The plastic-producing companies continue to make money and shift the responsibility to the public.

Plastic recycling is difficult and inefficient and costly at every stage of the process. The end state of plastic is microplastic, which, as we know, is everywhere: in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat.

Worldwide, one million plastic bottles are bought every minute. (National Geographic Magazine, August 23, 2019)

It is time to end the Age of Plastic. Plastic-producing companies must be made to take responsibility for the life-cycle of their product. Manufacturers of all products, from soup to nuts, must find alternate packaging which is genuinely recyclable and reusable. It is time to change our thinking about plastic.

Personally, I have been able to reduce my plastic consumption by an estimated 80% over the past year by following the advice of Association québécoise Zéro Déchets and other zero-waste advocates.

I was informed and inspired by a CBC television programme, Plastic Wars on The Passionate Eye, available to watch on CBC Gem.

Governments must find a way to make the manufacturers and consumers of plastic packaging take responsibility for the precarious health of our only world. Governments have legislative and economic tools and must use them to curtail the use of plastic products.

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