

HOW TO REGULATE THE USE OF POLYSTYRENE

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How to Regulate The Use Of Polystyrene

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Executive Summary

Polystyrene is one of the most commonly used single-use plastics in the world. Without it we would be at a loss, or would we? The answer is no, we would not be at a loss instead we are at a loss with the environment right now. Together Nova Scotia has to look at ways to put an end to the use of polystyrene products. The material causes pain to the ecosystem and health, so why not make the change and lead by example for the other provinces of Canada?

In this essay there will be a discussion about the ways in which polystyrene affects not only the environment but how it affects one's health as well. In addition to the discussion around the hazards of polystyrene to the environment and one's health, the essay describes the ways in which the Nova Scotia government can implement strict policies regarding the ban on all polystyrene products and how every community across the province can come together and fight for the cause. Furthermore, the essay examines how Nova Scotia can overcome the difficulties businesses will face when adjusting to more eco-friendly alternatives and how the government can act in accordance to help businesses modify their methods.

Over 14 million US tons of polystyrene products are manufactured every year throughout the whole world. By implementing policies to ban polystyrene products in Nova Scotia, residents will see a huge decrease in hazardous air pollution.

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“A national ban on many single-use plastics is on track for next year after a government report concluded Thursday that there is more than enough evidence proving plastic pollution is harmful.” (Rabson, 2020); single-use plastics have always been harmful to the ecological environment since they were invented. It is a must that the Canadian government should follow through with the ban of single-use plastics. It is evident that countries have already done so and have succeeded in their journey by introducing new bills to their federal legislature regarding fines for residents who are caught importing or selling banned items. A big step for all provinces in Canada is to include the ban of polystyrene.

Polystyrene is all around us. It is used to make various utilities such as food packaging, electronics, automobile parts, toys, and much more. Styrofoam is a trademarked term and a word used to describe polystyrene foam. Styrofoam is made out of petroleum which is a heavy polluting resource and can lead to developmental and immunological disorders. It is non-sustainable and unlike most plastic utensils, Styrofoam utensils cannot be recycled prompting more toxic waste in landfills, “In Canada, 80 percent of Styrofoam ends up in landfills or the environment.” (Wallis, 2018).

What people do not know about the harmful substance is that it is very easy to reduce the utilization of polystyrene. The province of Nova Scotia can look at ways to minimize the usage of polystyrene by following in the footsteps of countries that have completely banned single-use plastic boxes and polystyrene materials that stem from oil refineries. Among these countries like Jamaica, Belize, Barbados, Bahamas, and Costa Rica, many are considered as developing

countries, however, they have still managed to ban the use of polystyrene and single-use plastics. This is a major movement towards the improvement of our environment. Nova Scotia should take this as an inspiration for the better of the province and lead by example for Canada by banning the use of polystyrene.

Another major effect polystyrene has on the environment is the amount of pollution in the oceans. “The United Nations Environment Program estimated in 2006 that every square mile of ocean hosts 46,000 pieces of floating plastic.” (Sims, 2010); much of the floating plastic is made with polystyrene. It is lightweight, and is blown from landfill sights into the ocean creating ocean pollution. Because of this lightweight material it gets broken down into tiny pieces which are then ingested by marine life, poisoning them and creating a shorter lifespan. For this reason everyone should come together as a province and consider this point of view when discussing with the government the need to ban polystyrene products.

Although polystyrene is a rising issue in the world of climate change, it has its benefits which could be a barrier when overcoming the ban of polystyrene products. Styrofoam, which is made from polystyrene, is used everywhere especially in the food industry. It is used in various food services to help keep food last longer and to keep it fresh. The cost of Styrofoam is another good asset when it comes to saving money. However there are many other alternatives that are healthier and more sustainable for the environment. For example, the use of peat plastic and bamboo fiber is more eco-friendly, however they are more expensive. Putting an end to polystyrene can cause mixed emotions generally among the consumers and suppliers, because it will likely lead to a price increase when buying the more expensive materials for their business.

Nevertheless this is something the government of Nova Scotia has to do in order to reduce the amount of pollution caused by polystyrene.

By setting an exact date to end the use of polystyrene, the Nova Scotia Government can look at ways to prepare their province by taking responsibility to educate citizens about the importance of obeying the law that will ban polystyrene. Holding workshops about the environmental impacts that polystyrene has on the planet can inspire people to be more hesitant when deciding whether or not they should use this product. The government can work with local businesses and restaurants to find biodegradable and reusable alternative ways to keep their food secure while finding ways to make it more cost-effective and keeping it eco-friendly. Nova Scotia will have to come up with a fee to issue fines to people who are caught importing or selling polystyrene products to ensure that people think twice about using the non-eco friendly material. This will allow a more strict, concise, and faster approach to the ban.

By implementing policies Nova Scotia will see a huge decrease of polystyrene products in their landfills, less pollution in the oceans, and less styrene in the human body, “A 1988 survey, published by the Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education also found styrene in human fatty tissue with a frequency of 100% at levels from 8 to 350 nanograms/gram (ng/g).” (Sims, 2010). This goes to show that not only the health of the environment is at risk, but also our health as human beings. One way to live a healthier lifestyle without the use of polystyrene, is by letting consumers bring their own bag and reusable container to the suppliers, this way both the supplier and consumer benefit from cost-efficiency and staying environmentally and health-friendly. Zero toxins will be entering their system and zero toxins will be entering the ecosystem.

Everyone and anyone of all ages can help influence policy development. Doing research and knowing the issues surrounding this topic can help most anyone be better equipped when helping prevent polystyrene. Using the power of knowledge people can influence one another to be more environmentally friendly by teaching someone the importance of how harmful polystyrene is to our bodies, marine life, and in general, the ecosystem. Making people aware of how they can reduce the use of polystyrene will give people an idea of how not only they can save money but also be eco-friendly at the same time. Ways in which people can influence the province to ban polystyrene is through social media. This is the fastest and easiest way to get the message across to thousands of people. Leading by example is also key for influencing this policy. For example, bringing your own reusable containers to food outlets will help guide and influence others in the same direction. Taking action before anyone else has will already make someone become an environmental leader.

Understanding both sides of the debate whether or not to ban polystyrene is vital when fighting for the policy development to take place. Understanding the different viewpoints of the opposition will help with arguments and how to take action in the most effective ways. With this insight it will become easier to fight for the cause.

In general polystyrene is a plastic that Nova Scotia absolutely needs to ban. From polystyrene containers to packaging and electronics, all are harmful to not only the environment but also everyone's health. Clearly we can do better, and by following these recommendations outlined in this essay, everyone of all ages can help. The province of Nova Scotia has to lead by example and move forward with the ban of polystyrene products and look at alternative ways to replace this product with environmentally friendly biodegradable material.

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