

April 2021

# A FRIENDLIER COMPANY RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The single-use plastic ban will not only make significant strides towards reducing pollution in Canada, but it will also support innovative businesses like A Friendlier Company. Founded by two young, female engineering graduates from the University of Waterloo, this tech-driven start-up is on a mission to simplify the implementation of reusable packaging. By supporting reuse companies, the federal government can support the creation of thousands of skilled and unskilled jobs across the country. Through collaboration from Canadian manufacturers and reuse companies, we can create a circular economy through which products are initially manufactured in Canada, recirculated by our innovative reuse companies, and then reprocessed and recycled by local companies to create new products. Recycling alone is not working – with only 9% of plastic recycled in Canada, we need to implement feasible reuse systems that will both support the local economy as well as reduce the volume of single-use products that are ending up in our landfills and environment.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Create funding for early-stage, innovative, Canadian reuse companies
- B. Support the shift toward reusable packaging and products by adjusting federal procurement programs to reusables
- C. Impose restrictions on bio-based and so-called compostable plastics, including an immediate ban on oxo-degradable products and packaging
- D. Create grant or subsidy programs for small businesses who adopt reusable packaging

## 3. ABOUT A FRIENDLIER COMPANY

A Friendlier Company is a start-up venture leveraging technology to create a centralized reuse system for food service packaging in Canada. Our system can support manufacturers and retailers in diverting their waste from blue boxes and landfills. By

focussing on reuse and manufacturing products to last, we can create jobs in Canada, decrease energy and resource usage, and divert waste from landfills.

In six short months, we have reused over 5000 containers, and have partnered with 25 restaurants and food service businesses. Our customers not only benefit from the sustainability aspects of our program, but they have also reported new customers and an increase in return customers.



Figure 1. A Friendlier Company Reuse Process

Our reusable containers can be used over one hundred times, and we have estimated that they have lower carbon footprints than disposables after only one reuse. We sell our durable takeout containers to food service businesses like restaurants, then facilitate the reverse logistics to reuse the containers. Each container has a unique QR code printed on the bottom that we use for tracking purposes. Our mobile application has an integrated QR code scanner that consumers can use to claim incentives for returning their containers to any of our participating locations. Our return system is contact-free and can be applied to reuse other packaging and food service items like cutlery or cups. Our containers are manufactured in Ontario, and the washing and sanitation is performed locally. By keeping operations local, we can reduce emissions produced from transportation and create job opportunities.



*Figure 2. Dishwashing employee at A Friendlier Company*

A major advantage to reuse is that costs can be competitive with current disposable options since the containers must only be purchased new once. Our price point for food service businesses is lower than most disposable plastic containers. We also create additional marketing opportunities for these businesses as they can demonstrate their commitment to the environment and be featured on our mobile application. We handle all washing, sanitation, and redistribution, so food service businesses do not need to take on any additional responsibilities. Our commercial dishwashing facilities completely sanitize the containers, so consumers can rest assured knowing that the containers are safe to use, every time. Our reuse system offers food service businesses the ability to offer sustainable takeout containers at a competitive cost. By creating a centralized system, we can make it extremely convenient for businesses and consumers to reuse.

By building the infrastructure for a centralized reuse system in Canada, we are making reuse simple, affordable, and accessible. Our innovative technology has a huge potential to support a strong reverse logistics system and that can be used for other reuse systems in the future. Our company has been built in Canada and will grow to support a number of local job opportunities.

#### **4. ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

A Friendlier Company was founded by two young, female engineers with a strong mission and strong values. We have recently hired a technical lead with exceptional qualifications. She is a young graduate, and recent Canadian immigrant from Iran with a master's in electrical engineering. We are building our team to represent the diversity that we have in Canada, and to provide opportunities to those who are deserving of them. We plan to hire for a number of skilled positions like this in the next year, in areas such as engineering, data analyses, marketing, and sales.



*Figure 3. Technical Lead at A Friendlier Company*

In addition to these skilled positions, we will be hiring for a number of logistics and distribution, and dishwashing positions. In each region we expand to, we will be creating these types of jobs. This is extremely important, as these types of workers have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will replace the lost jobs, as well as create new jobs through our labour-intensive circular economy.

We plan to scale our reuse system across Canada by 2028 and expand our product line to include additional food packaging items. With one hundred city “hubs”, we project that we can support all urban regions in Canada. Each hub location would require five to twenty employees to support washing and packaging operations. Additionally, we will be expanding our team in Canada with skilled positions in engineering, software development, sales and marketing, and material scientists.



*Figure 4. A Friendlier Company Founders*

Our containers are manufactured in Aurora, Ontario at CuBE Packaging. Every component of our system is local. When our containers are at the end of their lives, we send them to GreenMantra in Brantford, Ontario to be recycled into their asphalt products. By supporting reuse systems in Canada, and encouraging the packaging industry to build reusable products, we can create a 100% local, circular economy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Reuse companies like A Friendlier Company are building the infrastructure for an economically viable, and sustainable circular system for packaging. We need the support of the federal government to excel our growth and support the transition away from single-use packaging. Through education, funding, and appropriate regulations, we can create an exemplary circular economy in Canada. The single-use plastic ban is not going to harm businesses, like those in the food service industry. We are creating solutions for them that are more affordable than disposables. With over 25 food service partners, and over 5000 takeout containers reused, we have validated that the Ontario market is ready for reusable packaging. The single-use plastic ban is critical to support our success and growth across the country.