

A brief explanation for the requested amendment to the Town of Millis – 2019 – Plastic Bag Reduction Bylaw which went into effect July 1, 2020. The original purpose and intent of the 2019 ByLaw was **to eliminate the usage of “thin-film” single-use plastic bags by all retail stores in the Town of Millis.**

In 2020, Roche Bros. HQ staff researched alternate bag options to assist customers in safely transporting groceries from store to home. They found a 4 mil “thick-film” plastic bag option which they believed was in compliance with the Town bylaw because it was not “thin-film” (as described in the bylaw) and was marketed as “reusable.” However, the Town of Millis ByLaw clearly states: *“A Reusable checkout bag may not be made of polyethylene or polyvinyl chloride.”* The thicker bags are made of low density polyethylene and therefore are in violation of the bylaw, as confirmed by the Board of Health.

Oceana staff and Millis resident, Nancy Downes, reached out to the Town of Millis to request revising the ByLaw to provide better clarity on ambiguous language used to describe plastic bags. The intent is to reduce the chances of any type of plastic bag being re-introduced into the community (minus certain exceptions as outlined in the ByLaw). The proposed Amendment language provides clear and detailed definitions for what is considered a plastic check out bag, reusable check out bag, and recyclable paper bag.

The amendment language does not have any impact to the retail stores in the Town of Millis. As far as business owners are concerned, the ByLaw remains the same, in that all retail stores in Millis are not allowed to distribute “any film” plastic bags. The amended language honors the original intent of eliminating the use of plastic check out bag while promoting the use of reusable bags.

Numerous cities in Massachusetts have chosen to include similar detailed definitions in newly written bylaws (ex: Kingston) aimed to address plastic bags and-or amend existing plastic bag bylaws (ex: Framingham) to avoid thick-film bags from entering their community’s waste-stream.