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Single Use Retail Bag Fee Implemented in the NWT

YELLOWKNIFE (January 15, 2010) – Beginning today, paper and plastic bags will cost 25 cents at all grocery store check-out counters in the Northwest Territories.

“Our territory has a beautiful and pristine environment,” said Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) J. Michael Miltenberger. “Switching to reusable bags is an easy way to help protect it, and I hope all NWT residents will join me in making that switch.”

The introduction of the 25-cent environmental fee is a part of the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) Waste Reduction and Recovery Program Expansion and is intended to reduce litter on the land and in communities.

Fees for single-use retail bags have consistently worked to reduce consumption in other jurisdictions, with higher fees linked to fewer bags purchased. Fees collected from this initiative will go into the GNWT's Environment Fund to help pay for future waste reduction and recycling programs.

Minister Miltenberger says he hopes NWT residents consider the new fee as a measure to help them adapt and change their shopping practices in preparation for the eventual elimination of all single-use shopping bags in the NWT.

The environmental fee does not include bags used inside grocery stores for unpackaged bulk items, prescriptions, or bags used as primary packaging for prepared foods.

The Department of ENR has been running a campaign encouraging residents to switch to reusable bags. The campaign included the distribution of two reusable bags to every household in the NWT.

The GNWT's Waste Reduction and Recovery Program Expansion is part of the Managing This Land strategic initiative identified to meet the 16th Legislative Assembly's goal of an environment that will sustain present and future generations.

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