

Resolution - Accessible and Effective Alcohol Container Return System in Ontario

Moved by Renée Carrie

Seconded by Lynda Carleton

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario has introduced new regulations effective January 1, 2025, requiring grocery stores with over 4,000 square feet of retail space to accept empty alcohol containers and return deposits as a condition of maintaining their liquor licenses; and

WHEREAS many large retailers have expressed resistance to this legal obligation due to logistical challenges, including health and safety concerns, space constraints, and inadequate infrastructure to process large volumes of returned containers; and

WHEREAS the current situation threatens to impact vulnerable populations, including low-income residents who rely on bottle returns as a modest but vital source of income; and

WHEREAS the privatization and deregulation of Ontario's once-effective bottle return program may risk unraveling decades of progress in sustainable waste management, environmental responsibility, and circular economy initiatives; and

WHEREAS the absence of a clear, accessible, and equitable alternative recycling solution would lead to greater pressure on municipal waste systems and increased environmental harm;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities supports the establishment of an accessible, province-wide, and publicly accountable alcohol container return system that:

1. Protects low-income earners and vulnerable residents who rely on bottle returns;
2. Closes gaps in the deposit-return cycle to reduce landfill waste and environmental harm;
3. Provides adequate infrastructure and support to retailers tasked with participating in the return system;
4. Ensures strong and consistent enforcement of compliance with return regulations;
5. Preserves the public interest in recycling systems amid increasing privatization pressures;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities urges the Government of Ontario to work collaboratively with municipalities, retailers, environmental organizations, and social agencies to implement a fair, efficient, and inclusive solution that ensures the long-term success of Ontario's deposit-return system.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to Premier Doug Ford, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

Motion Carried