



NATIONAL

NEW SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BAN

— SIX PLASTICS PRODUCTS TO BE OUTLAWED BY 2021



It poisons sea creatures, or chokes the life out of them. It harms the air we breathe and the food we eat. It fouls once-unspoiled beaches. It will never, ever entirely go away.

What's the **culprit**? Plastic.

THE PLASTIC PROBLEM

The world makes nearly 400 million tonnes of plastic a year. Canada accounts for 3.3 million tonnes of that amount.

We dispose of it irresponsibly. Worldwide, some 22,000 tonnes of plastic enter the oceans daily. That's about the same as one full garbage truck per minute! In Canada, 29,000 tonnes of plastic seeps into the environment annually.

Plastic also contributes to global warming. Made from petroleum, it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere when it is

burned as waste. That increases carbon emissions.

FANTASTIC PLASTIC?

So should we stop using plastic altogether? Most experts say that wouldn't be practical. After all, plastic has many valuable features. It is cheap to make. It is strong and lightweight. It is **malleable**. Manufacturers rely on it to make sports equipment, electronics, household goods, building materials, cars, medical equipment, farming tools, and thousands of other items.

So what's the solution? We need to do a better job of managing it.

THE LAST STRAW

The obvious place to start, says the federal government, is to ban plastic goods that we use only once and then toss away. These items end up in our landfills and waterways because they're too hard or too costly to recycle. Yet

DID YOU KNOW?

Solar radiation, wind, currents, and other natural factors break plastics into microplastics (particles smaller than 5 mm) or nanoplastics (particles smaller than 100 nm).

non-plastic recyclable products can easily take their place.

So by the end of 2021, Canada will ban six of the worst offenders. They are checkout bags, straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery, and hard-to-recycle food containers. Our nation joins 35 other countries that have pledged similar moves.

"Plastic pollution... fills our rivers or lakes, and most particularly our oceans, choking wildlife," says Jonathan Wilkinson. He's the federal environment minister. "[We] see

DEFINITIONS

CULPRIT: something that is responsible for a bad situation

MALLEABLE: easy to bend or to make into a different shape

NM: nanometre; a unit of length equal to one billionth of a metre



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the impact... from coast to coast to coast.”

REACTION TO THE BAN

The NDP and the Green Party support the Liberal government’s single-use plastics ban.

At present, 47 percent of our plastic waste comes from packaging and single-use products. Canadians leave stores with up to 15 billion plastic bags every year. We sip drinks through 57 million plastic straws every day. Not using these items will make a big difference.

However, not everyone is backing the proposed ban. Activist Maude Barlow, for one, says it doesn't go nearly far enough. She believes the ban should include plastic bottles, too. About one billion bottles end up in landfills or the environment every year in Ontario alone.

Diane Brisebois, president of the Retail Council of Canada, has another concern. Her group represents about 45,000 stores. She said retailers support eliminating single-use products. But she warned that the price of goods will go up if new federal standards aren't applied equally across the country

THE CANADA-WIDE STRATEGY ON ZERO PLASTIC WASTE

Banning single-use products is part of a larger effort called The Canada-Wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste. This plan was launched in 2019. Its goal is to reduce plastic’s harmful impacts. How? By preventing more plastic from entering landfills, and by doing a better job of recycling it.

The program commits the federal government, the provinces, and the territories to work with industry to reuse, recycle, or **repurpose** 100 percent of all plastics by 2030. It aims to set standards for firms that produce plastic waste or use it to package goods. It would make them more responsible for managing and paying for the plastic they discard.

In this way, the government hopes to achieve a circular plastic economy that keeps these materials in use as long as possible. It estimates that doing so will prevent 1.82 **megatonnes** of CO₂ equivalent greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere. It will also create 42,000 jobs in recycling and elsewhere.

A BIG SPIKE IN TRASH

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party worried that the new rules could apply to personal protective equipment (PPE). Hospital personnel and others use PPE to guard against COVID-19 and other **communicable** diseases. By some estimates, PPE use has increased plastic waste by up to 300 percent since the pandemic began.

But the federal environment minister said there was no need to worry. PPE will not be outlawed. However, he’s working

to see that they won't gather in landfills, either.

HOPE FOR THE OCEANS

In the meantime, banning six throwaway plastics is a start.

“There is still hope for our oceans,” says Kim Elmslie of Oceana Canada. “We can end the plastic disaster for ourselves, for our oceans, and for our future by stopping it at the source. [With] the promised national ban, our government has an opportunity to show leadership in helping solve this global crisis that we as a country are contributing to.” ★

DEFINITIONS

COMMUNICABLE: able to be passed to another person

MEGATONNE: a unit of mass equal to 1,000,000 metric tons.

(A metric ton is exactly 1000 kilograms, making a megatonne equal to 1,000,000,000 kilograms.)

REPURPOSE: to change (something) so that it can be used for a different purpose



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much plastic is produced globally and in Canada each year?

2. Why is plastic a problem for the planet and for people? Explain.

3. Why do most experts say we should not stop using plastic altogether?

4. What is the Canada-Wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste? What is its goal, and when was it introduced?

5. Name the six single-use plastics that Ottawa proposes to ban by the end of 2021.

6. What concerns do critics of the ban have? Explain.



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ORGANIZER

A. The new single-use plastics ban will impact the way we live and the way that certain businesses are run. Complete the table below, considering who might be affected by each product's ban, and suggesting how they might need to adapt.

Banned product	Who will be affected?	How will they adapt?
Checkout bags		
Straws		
Stir sticks		
Six-pack rings		
Cutlery		
Hard-to-recycle food containers		

B. When you consider this information as a whole, which sector of society do you think will be *most* impacted by this ban? Explain.



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QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. Imagine that you are part of your school's environmental club and that you have been asked to create a campaign to raise student awareness of the new single-use plastics ban.

a) What information would you choose to share with students?

b) How would you choose to communicate that information?

2. Which one of the six banned products will you miss the most in your day-to-day life, and what adjustments will you need to make when it is no longer available? Explain.



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QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

Note: The links below are listed at www.lesplan.com/en/links for easy access.

1. Despite the many advantages of banning single-use plastics, critics warn that the ban may create other problems. Visit one of the links below to learn more about these concerns:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/plastic-grocery-bag-ban-environment-1.5755723>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/single-use-plastics-ban-new-nafta-1.5758676>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/canada-plastic-ban-oceans-1.5756209>

After reading your chosen article, respond to it, using the following prompts:

I understood _____

I was surprised to learn that _____

I wonder _____

2. Visit one of the following links to learn more about plastic recycling:

<https://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/the-passionate-eye/recycling-was-a-lie-a-big-lie-to-sell-more-plastic-industry-experts-say-1.5735618>

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/raymond-j-de-souza-we-can-finally-admit-that-plastic-recycling-has-been-a-sham-all-along>

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-oct-8-2020-1.5754971/industry-has-known-for-decades-that-most-plastic-just-can-t-be-recycled-says-investigative-journalist-1.5755397>

As you see it, what challenges are involved in plastic recycling, and what steps must the federal government take to make recycling plastics more feasible? Explain.

3. Visit <https://www.globalgoals.org/> and determine which of the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development might be related to the proposed single-use plastics ban. Support your response with details.



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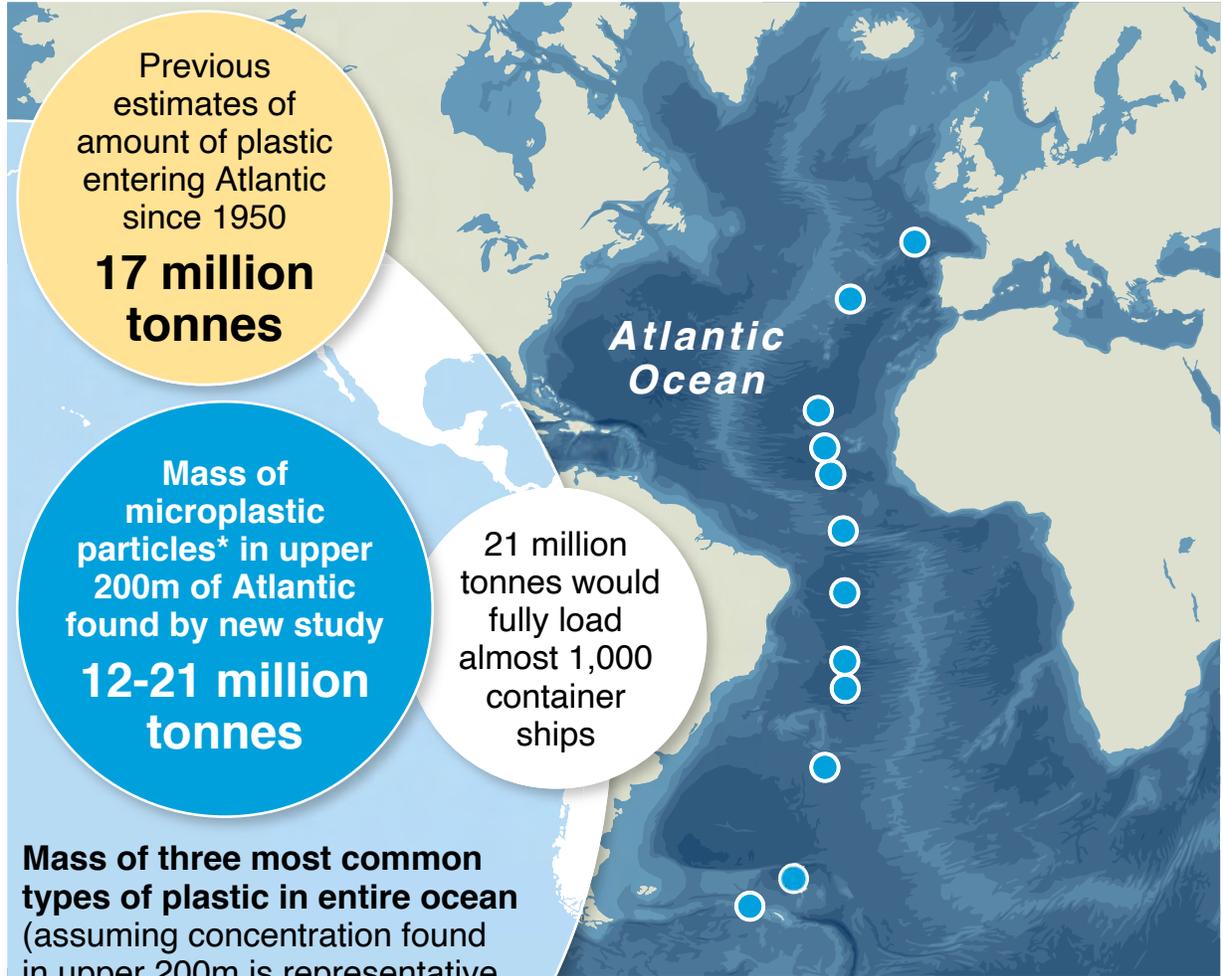
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INFOGRAPHIC

Atlantic Ocean swamped by plastic

There is at least 10 times more plastic in the Atlantic Ocean than previously thought, according to a study led by the UK's National Oceanography Centre



Previous estimates of amount of plastic entering Atlantic since 1950
17 million tonnes

Mass of microplastic particles* in upper 200m of Atlantic found by new study
12-21 million tonnes

21 million tonnes would fully load almost 1,000 container ships

Mass of three most common types of plastic in entire ocean (assuming concentration found in upper 200m is representative of rest of depth of Atlantic)
200 million tonnes (or 178 million tonnes more compared to previous estimates)

● **Sample sites:** Three most common types of plastic litter – polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP) and polystyrene (PS) – assessed at 12 locations in 2016



*Ranging from 32-651 microns in size (human hair is about 75 microns across).
Study team found up to 7,000 particles per cubic metre of seawater

Sources: BBC, Nature Communications, Phys.org

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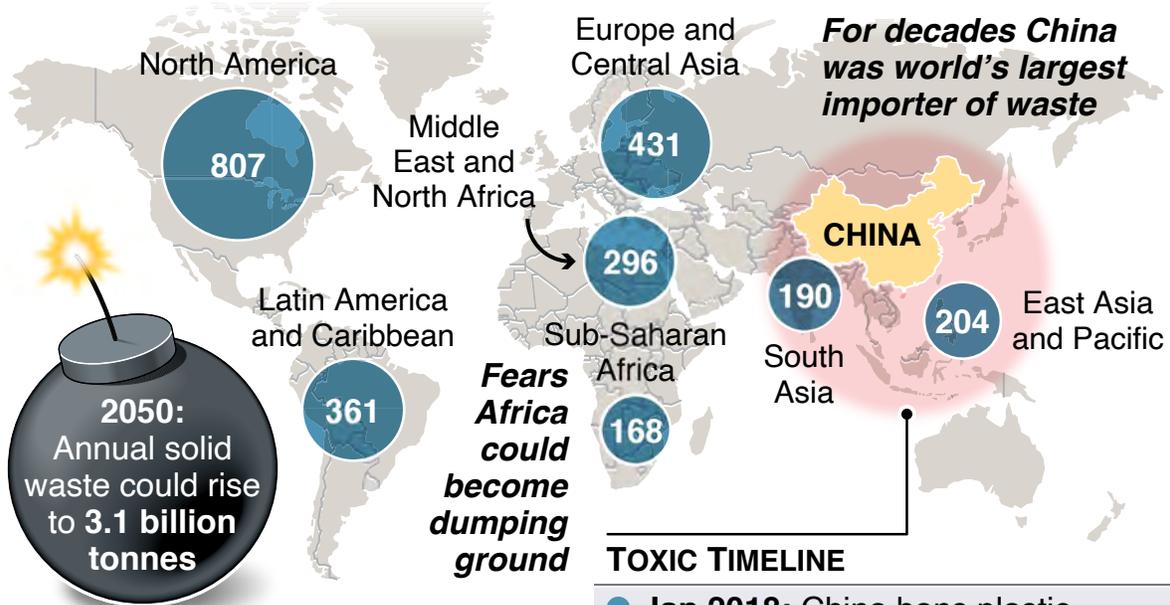


INFOGRAPHIC

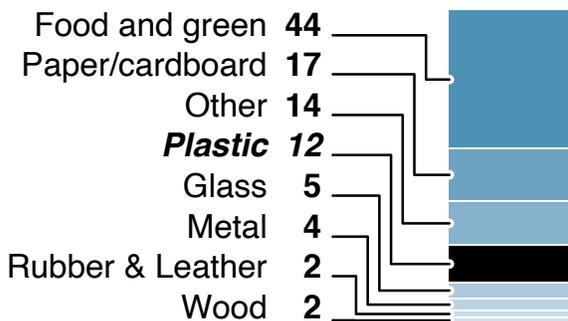
Ticking time bomb of global trash

Humans generated 1.8 billion tonnes of solid waste in 2016, including 220 million tonnes of plastic, according to the World Bank

SOLID WASTE CREATION, PER PERSON, PER YEAR (2016 estimate, kg)



GLOBAL WASTE COMPOSITION (%)



Each year, 4m-12m tonnes of plastic enters our oceans

Sources: Bloomberg, World Bank Group, Deutsche Welle Picture: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

TOXIC TIMELINE

- **Jan 2018:** China bans plastic, paper and electronic waste imports. Until then, it had been taking in up to 56% of world's unwanted plastic. **Trash imports in Southeast Asia rise significantly**
- **Jul:** Vietnam cracks down on illegal imports of waste paper, plastic and metal
- **Oct:** Thailand stops issuing import licences for plastic waste
- Malaysia bans plastic scrap imports
- **Mar 2019:** India prohibits import of plastic waste
- **Jun:** Philippines returns 69 containers of garbage to Canada
- Indonesia tightens waste-import rules after finding falsely-labelled containers of toxic waste from U.S.

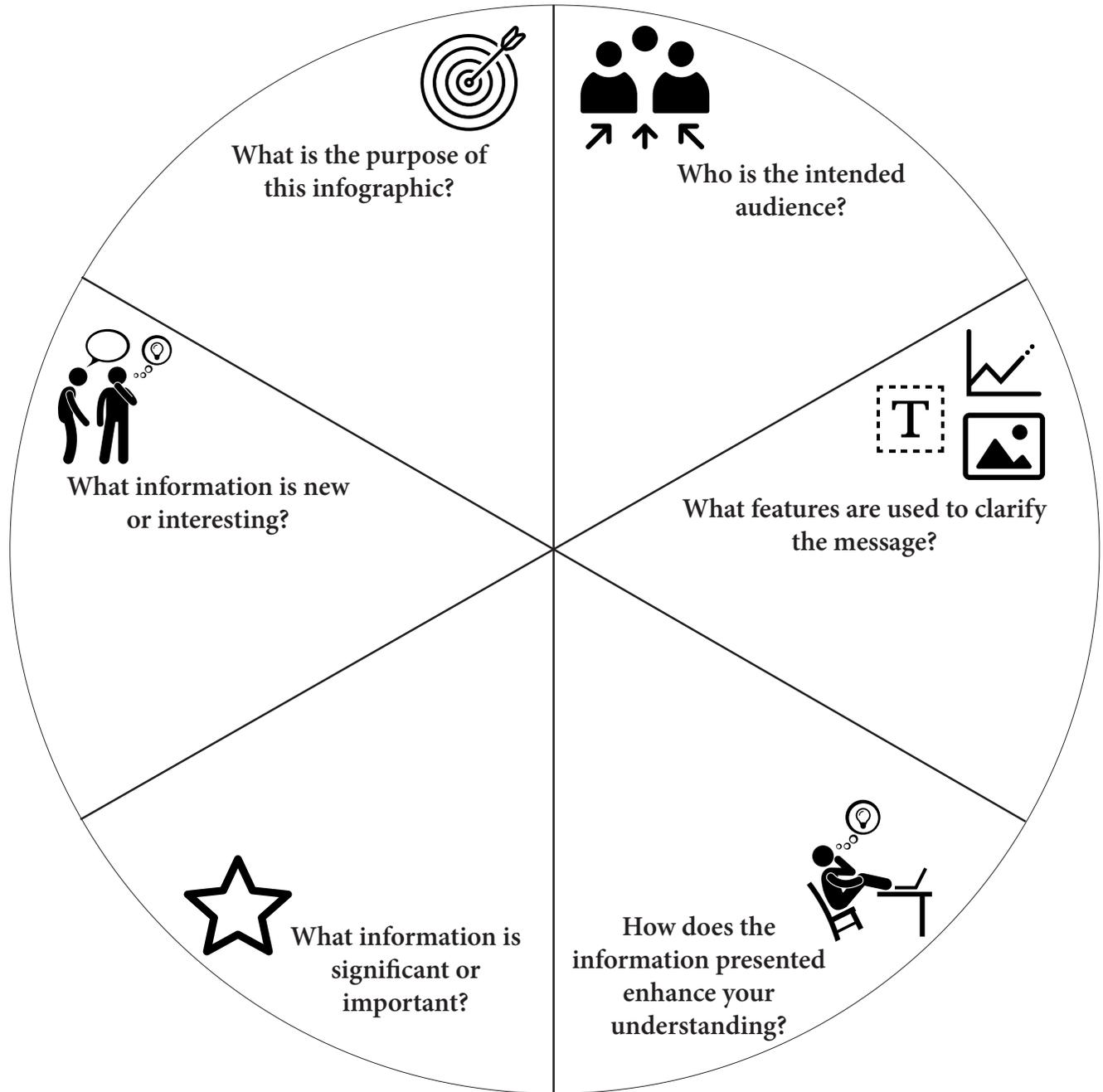


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ANALYZING AN INFOGRAPHIC



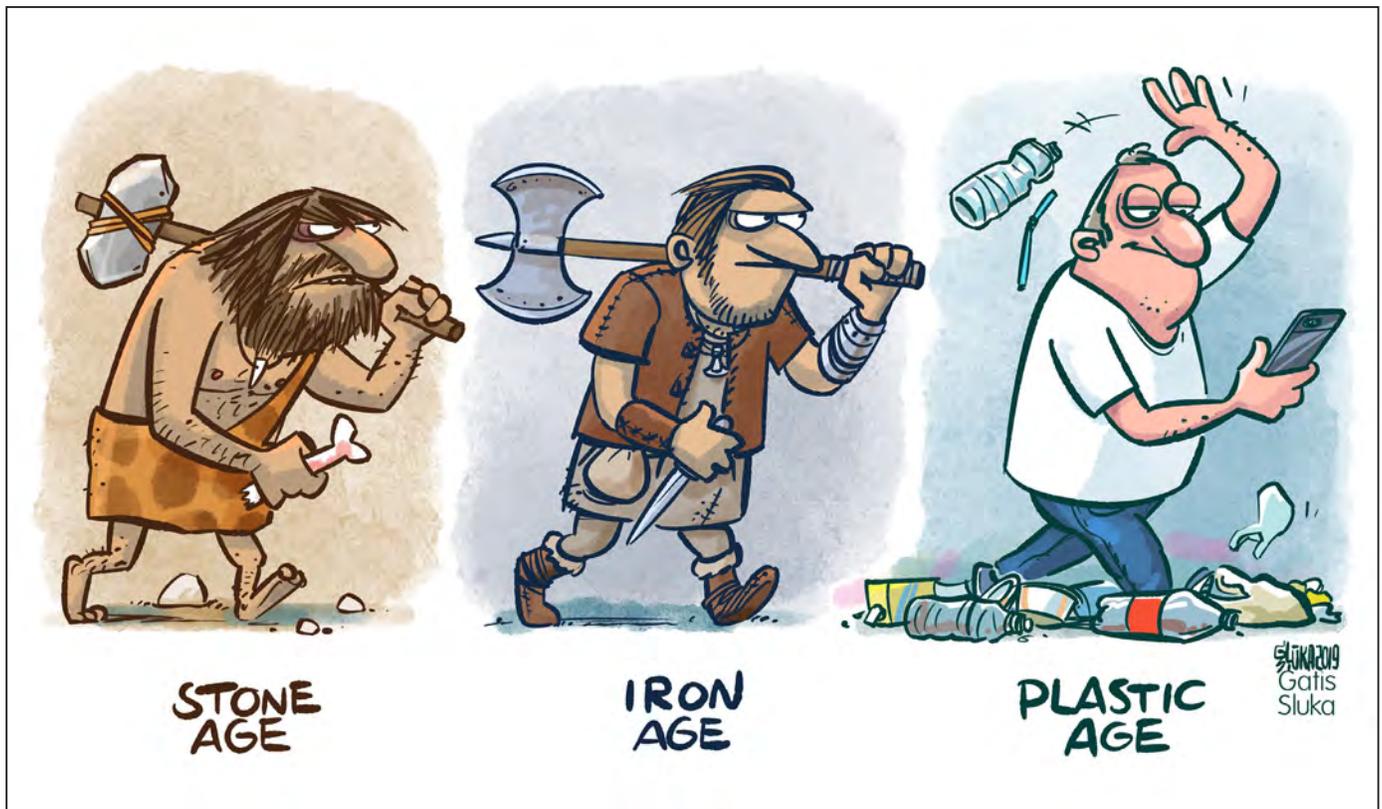
What questions do you still have about the topic presented?



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YOUR TASK:

Examine the editorial cartoon, then answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper:

1. What do you already know about our use and disposal of plastic?
2. Describe what you *see* and *read* in the cartoon.
3. As you see it, what might the cartoonist be saying about our use and disposal of plastic? Explain.
4. For what reasons do you agree with the cartoonist's perspective? For what reasons do you disagree? ★