I am writing to you today to bring your attention to the issue of single-use plastic within your grocery store. Grocery shopping, a regularly occurring activity for many people, typically produces a tremendous amount of waste. This waste is damaging to our planet, and continues to degrade our diverse ecosystems.

I work extremely hard to cut-down on the amount of plastic waste I bring into my home, but find it challenging when there are few ‘unwrapped’ options at the grocery store. Why does my cucumber need to come wrapped in plastic? Why is it cheaper to purchase apples wrapped in plastic than it is to bring apples home in my own produce bag?

Plastic does eventually break down, but it leaves behind micro-plastics. These micro-plastics never fully degrade and will be around forever. They have been found littered in the ocean, in the great lakes, and even in Lake Winnipeg. They’re harmful to animals, soil, water, and human health.

Plastics are made from petroleum products. The resource extraction required to produce plastics worsens our current climate crisis: we need to mitigate the amount of petroleum products we are using.

The amount of plastic we use adds up. Retail plastic bags in Manitoba alone uses crude oil resources equal to over 2-million (2,261,760) liters of gas each year. That is enough for 27-million (26,903,040) kilometres of city driving or 37-million (37,021,440) kilometres on the highway. This is a tremendous amount of carbon pollution.

When considering plastic reduction within your grocery store, there are many alternatives that grocery stores can support.

1. Public education on waste, litter and reusable alternatives.
2. Charging for bags, with proceeds dedicated to community waste reduction education (either internally or externally).
3. Creating a bulk section and allowing customers to bring their own reusable containers when purchasing dry goods.
4. Request that producers you are ordering from reduce the amount of single-use plastic packaging their product is being delivered in.

As the public starts to become increasingly concerned about this issue, businesses like yours can become a leader in waste reduction. Strategic steps to reduce waste would make it easier for myself, and other Manitobans to choose shopping at your store.