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**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

**CC:** "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"

"LaClaire, Lon" <lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca>

**Date:** 7/28/2020 4:57:38 PM

**Subject:** Memo (RTS 13930 & RTS 13928): Pandemic Impacts on the Single-Use Item By-laws and Recycling Electronics and Film Plastics

**Attachments:** ENG - ZWRR - COVID-19 - Memo to Mayor and Council - Single-Use Item By-l...pdf

Greetings Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Lon LaClaire regarding Single-Use Item By-Laws and Recycling Electronics and Film Plastics.

- This memo is in response to two inquiries from Council (RTS 13930 & RTS 13928):
  - RTS 013930 – requested information on the effect of COVID-19 on upcoming Single Use Item bylaws, particularly reusable bags and cups
    - Initial direction in March from BC Centre for Disease Control was no re-usable bags or cups. That Direction changed gradually so that at the end of March re-usable bags were allowed if customers bagged them themselves. As of June, both reusable bags and cups are allowed and can be filled by staff, staff doing so need to regularly wash hands
    - In order to minimize risk to staff most grocery stores are still requiring residents bringing reusable bags to bag their own groceries and while some coffee shops are allowing refillables, many are still restricting their use. This may change as the province continues to open up.
    - At the end of June the Province of BC amended the Recycling Regulation to require EPR for Single use the items covered by our by-laws, plus other single-use items, starting January 1, 2023.
  - RTS 013928 – requested information on options for drop off of plastics and electronics with the closure of a number of drop off locations and London Drugs no longer accepting materials for drop off.
    - Initially a number of facilities closed due to potential COVID- 19 impacts. Many of those facilities have now re-opened and are again accepting materials.
    - Staff are working with the Stewardship programs for these materials around building some resiliency into their systems.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lon LaClaire at 604-873-7336 or [lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca](mailto:lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca).

Best,  
Sadhu

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Pronouns: he, him, his



*The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.*

## MEMORANDUM

July 28, 2020

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**CC:** Sadhu Johnston, City Manager  
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Rena Kendall-Craden, Civic Engagement and Communications Director  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office  
Albert Shames, Director, Zero Waste and Resource Recovery  
Kathryn Holm, Director, Chief Licence Inspector and Director of Licensing & Community Standards  
Sandra Nikolic, Intergovernmental Relations Manager

**FROM:** Lon LaClaire  
General Manager, Engineering Services

**SUBJECT:** Pandemic Impacts on the Single-Use Item By-laws and Recycling Electronics and Film Plastics

On May 26, 2020, staff received 2 enquiries from council:

Report #	Subject	Description
<u>013930</u>	Impacts on Zero Waste By-laws During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Councillor Kirby-Yung enquired on the impacts of the zero waste proposed implementation by-laws, such as the ban on plastic bags, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the public being prohibited to bring their own reusable bags to grocery stores. The City Manager noted that staff is evaluating the impacts of COVID-19 on zero waste in the city, and continue to maintain awareness during this time, as the restrictions caused by COVID-19 are slowly lessening with time.
<u>013928</u>	Alternative Measures for Recycling Electronics and Flexible Packaging	Councillor Fry requested an update on alternative measures of recycling electronics and flexible packaging, especially in the Downtown area, in light of London Drugs having shut down their front of house zero waste services.

This memo addresses both inquiries.

## **013930 - Single-Use Item By-laws**

For the three by-laws that are in effect (foam, straws and utensils), education, outreach and enforcement was paused in March in response to COVID-19, when City operations shifted to providing emergency and essential services. Any enforcement initiatives have also been temporarily postponed during the pandemic response.

For the upcoming by-laws for shopping bags and cups timing remains the same with implementation effective Jan. 1, 2021 however, any further efforts towards education and outreach have also been paused.

Educational information about the by-laws remains available on the City's website at [vancouver.ca/reduce-single-use](http://vancouver.ca/reduce-single-use) and staff continue to respond to inquiries and log non-compliance complaints for existing bylaws for follow-up when education and enforcement resumes.

Staff are monitoring provincial health recommendations which have changed significantly over the course of COVID-19 and continue to evolve. Currently the by-laws align with provincial health recommendations.

We continue to monitor the impact status of reopening of the province and the City as part of the of COVID-19 response in order to assess when to resume education, outreach and enforcement. Factors influencing the timing include the success of the City's and Province's restart plans, and new findings or directions from public health officials regarding single-use items in food service establishments.

### **Current Provincial Health Recommendations**

- **Reusable Shopping Bags:** Currently allowed, no restrictions through provincial health recommendations. Initially, reusable shopping bags were prohibited in a guidance document for grocery stores published by the Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) on March 28. This was reversed on March 30 when the BCCDC published updated information on their website. BCCDC now advises that employees can handle or pack groceries into reusable bags and reminds employees who do so wash their hands frequently. This latest approach is more accessible to all customers, including people with disabilities.
- **Reusable Cups:** Currently allowed, no restrictions through provincial health recommendations. On June 8, BCCDC advised that reusable cups, including travel mugs, are allowed. Customers can fill their own reusable cups, or employees can handle them on behalf of customers and are advised to practice frequent hand washing after handling them.

## **Current Business Practices**

Bags - There is a mix of business responses to reusable bags with most requiring those using reusable bags to place their groceries inside themselves.

We aware that some coffee shops in Vancouver are accepting travel mugs, but many have switched to disposables in an effort to protect their staff. Staff in rural communities (e.g. Tofino) have shared that local businesses developed practices to serve drinks in reusable cups in response to local demand.

In both cases the businesses are taking these precautions in order to minimize the risk to their staff. As further opening proceeds we may see these approaches evolve.

## **Province Requires Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Single-Use Items**

One important development in dealing with single-use items is that on June 29, the Province amended the B.C. Recycling Regulation to require EPR for single-use items and “packaging-like products” by January 1, 2023. EPR will make producers (manufacturers, distributors and retailers) responsible for collecting and recycling single-use item waste generated in homes and in public spaces like streets, squares and parks.

The list of single-use items designated to be covered by EPR is broad and includes:

- Everything in the City’s Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy (straws, utensils, cups, take-out containers, shopping bags)
- Stir sticks
- Party supplies
- Any product that is ordinarily disposed of after a single use or short-term use, whether or not it could be reused
- “Packaging-like products” including food containers; foil and wraps; bags (e.g. freezer/sandwich bags); boxes; and objects purchased by or supplied to consumers expressly for the purpose of protecting, containing or transporting commodities or products (e.g. canning jars)

The regulation specifically excludes health, hygiene or safety products that, by virtue of their anticipated use, could become unsafe or unsanitary to recycle” (e.g. masks, gloves, etc.).

Staff will participate in upcoming consultations to help shape the details of these EPR programs.

This is a significant development given the City has advocated for EPR for single-use items through several channels, including letters from Council to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy on May 14, 2019 and December 19, 2019, and resolutions to UBCM in 2018 and 2019.

While the proposed EPR for single-use items is encouraging the City’s single-use item by-laws are still important. They’re being implemented a few years before these new EPR programs will come into effect and will complement EPR by driving reduction and encouraging reuse. Our

bans on foam cups and foam take-out containers, plastic straws and plastic shopping bags will stimulate demand for harmonized provincial bans across B.C.

## **013928 - Recycling Electronics and Film Plastics**

Electronics and plastic film recycling is provided through province-wide EPR programs. Generally speaking, these programs contract depots, retailers and not-for-profit organizations to provide a network of drop-off locations across British Columbia. The programs are funded by the businesses that supply electronics and packaging to BC residents, which shifts recycling costs away from the City's utility fees.

As a result of COVID-19, many recycling drop-off locations across BC suspended or reduced service during the initial weeks or months of the pandemic, including those contracted by EPR programs. London Drugs, a service provider for EPR programs, has paused its recycling services but many other locations have re-opened.

### *Electronics, small appliances and power tools*

- Sixteen drop-off locations in Vancouver are open, including eight Return-It depots, five Salvation Army locations, and three Best Buy stores (with one downtown)
- Telus continues to collect its modems through Canada Post
- Staff are also exploring opportunities to resume some recycling and reuse drop-off events starting in late summer to support the EPR programs
- Communications and social media around recycling options for electronics are being coordinated jointly between Metro, the City and the Waste Management Association of BC.

### *Plastic bags and other flexible plastic packaging*

- Four drop-off locations in Vancouver are open, including three Return-It depots and the City's Zero Waste Centre
- The Vancouver Landfill recycling depot also accepts these materials
- This spring, staff worked with Metro Vancouver to encourage Recycle BC to increase education aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling plastic bags and flexible plastic packaging. Increased messaging on social media is currently underway.

City staff are working with Metro Vancouver and the BC Product Stewardship Council, to find ways to enhance the resilience of the EPR collection systems and augment their drop-off collection networks

If you have any questions or concerns or need any more detail, please feel free to contact Albert Shames, Director of Zero Waste and Resource Recovery at 604-873-7300.



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# APPENDIX A

## Overview of Provincial Health Recommendations for Single-Use and Reusable Items

- **Reusable Shopping Bags:** Currently allowed, no restrictions through provincial health recommendations.
  - Reusable shopping bags were prohibited in a guidance for grocery stores published by the Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control on March 28, but have been allowed since March 30 when the BCCDC published updated information on their website.
  - The most recent guidance for grocers continues to allow reusable shopping bags<sup>1</sup>
  - Initially, the BCCDC recommended that stores have customers place their purchases in their reusable bags themselves without touching the checkout counter. This has evolved so that BCCDC now advises that employees can handle or pack groceries into reusable bags and reminds employees who do so wash their hands frequently.<sup>2</sup> Staff note this latest approach is more accessible to all customers, including people with disabilities.
- **Reusable Cups:** Currently allowed, no restrictions through provincial health recommendations.
  - On June 8, BCCDC advised that reusable cups, including travel mugs, are allowed.<sup>3</sup>
  - Customers can fill their own reusable cups, or employees can handle reusable cups on behalf of customers and are advised to practice frequent hand washing after handling them.
- **Paper Straws and Flexible Plastic Straws:** Currently allowed, no restrictions through provincial health recommendations.
- **Reusable Utensils:** Currently allowed, no restrictions through provincial health recommendations.
  - Hygienic and safe food and beverage services are maintained by following routine guidance in the Food Safety Act and the Food Premises Regulation, which involves thorough cleaning and sanitizing utensils and food handling surfaces regularly using standard sanitizing solutions.
  - In addition, shared serving utensils are allowed at buffets and bulk food dispensaries as long as handwashing stations or hand sanitizers are nearby, signage is posted reminding patrons to wash or sanitize their hands, and food surfaces and utensils are frequently cleaned.<sup>4</sup> While not directly relevant to the City's single-use item by-laws, this order further supports reusable systems if appropriate hygiene steps are in place.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health and BCCDC COVID-19 Guidance to Retail Food and Grocery Stores (April 25, 2020). [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/guidance\\_to\\_grocery\\_stores\\_april\\_25\\_final.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/guidance_to_grocery_stores_april_25_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The BCCDC COVID-19 web page for food businesses states, "If employees handle or pack groceries into reusable bags they are expected to practice frequent hand washing as described." <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses>

<sup>3</sup> Same link as previous.

<sup>4</sup> Order of the Provincial Health Officer for Food Service Establishments and Liquor Services (June 19, 2020). <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-nightclubs-food-drink.pdf>