

September 17, 2019

The Honourable George Heyman  
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Recycling Regulation Amendments  
PO Box 9341 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9M1

Dear Minister;

**Re: Clean BC - Plastics Action Plan**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the Clean BC Plastics Action Plan. The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP), which is waiting for Ministry approval, is targeting a waste diversion rate of 90% by 2028. The RDN SWMP identifies a potential 5% of the 90% diversion goal will be the result of improvements to existing or implementation of new federal and provincial programs. The RDN welcomes the provincial and federal interest in plastic waste and looks forward to seeing alignment of longer-term proposed initiatives for plastic waste.

In response to the request for submissions on the Province's Clean BC - Plastics Action Plan Consultation Paper, the RDN is pleased to provide the following responses to questions identified in Paper:

**Bans on Single-Use Packaging**

**Question 1:** *Do you think bans on plastic packaging should be implemented in BC? What plastic packaging products are a priority for BC to ban?*

Bans on plastic packaging that do not have a viable recycling market would be beneficial to further support waste reduction and diversion. Bans on plastic packaging align with the RDN Zero Waste Hierarchy by reducing the amount of 'unnecessary' plastic packaging at the production level rather than the consumer level. Plastic packaging products recommended as priority for BC to ban are:

- Foam cups and foam take out containers
- Plastic straws, stir sticks, and plastic cotton swabs
- Single-use plastic utensils and plates
- Biodegradable and Oxo-degradable plastic material
- Multi-laminate packaging

These items are difficult to recycle and have limited viable recycling markets. In addition, the bans should work to phase out materials that cannot be recycled or composted. Instead, initiatives should promote the production of new materials that are readily recycled and are made from recycled content.

**Question 2:** *What types of bans should be considered (examples include bans on sale of a certain type of packaging or ban on use of certain type, or bans on disposal)?*

Bans on sale and ultimately production of certain types of packaging is the preferred option as this prevents the material from being created in the first place. Disposal bans can be extremely difficult and impractical to implement or enforce at the local level and fines associated with bans are often considered as the “*cost of doing business*” rather than driving the desired behavioral change of waste reduction. Disposal bans can also encourage the export of waste to other jurisdictions which does not have the desired outcome of waste reduction.

Again, eliminating plastic packaging that is difficult to recycle at point of manufacture or sale will be more effective at reducing the amount of plastic that ultimately ends up in landfills or elsewhere in the environment. Material types that should be targeted are multi-laminated packaging (i.e. both plastic and plastic/paper). An alternative to bans on these types of packaging would be to set standards on recyclability, ensuring that the packaging can be readily recycled.

**Question 3:** *If a ban was applied, how should exemptions be considered?*

Ban exemptions should be considered only when supported by evidence that the ban will be problematic for individuals with accessibility needs or are a health care requirement.

**Question 4:** *Bans can be implemented in some form by all levels of government due to different regulatory powers in place. Are there bans best suited for implementation at the federal, provincial or local government level? Should local governments be given the authority to ban problematic plastic items in their community? What types of bans should be considered?*

Several BC municipalities are considering or have already introduced bans or restrictions on the use of plastic grocery bags and other single-use plastic items. While the RDN supports these efforts, the Province is best equipped from the perspective of regulatory authority and for the ease of consistency, to impose bans on single use plastics that may end up in the environment and waste stream. Provincial and federal level regulations allow large and small businesses to adapt with less disparity that might result from as bans introduced at a local level. Furthermore, the broader reach of provincial and federal programs allows for consistent messaging, common understanding by those affected and facilitates adoption of new programs.

### **More recycling options**

**Question 1:** *Do you have comments or suggestions regarding the ministry’s proposal to include packaging-like products in the Recycling Regulation?*

The Ministry should include all recyclable plastic products and packaging in the Recycling Regulation. Expanded Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs will ensure that producers are responsible for safely recycling and disposing of their materials. The Recycling Regulation is an effective tool in promoting the production of products and packaging that limit pollution risk to the environment, contain higher levels of recyclable content and can be easily recycled. There is significant opportunity to further utilize the Recycling Regulation in advancing a circular economy

**Question 2:** *Do you have comments or suggestions regarding the ministry's proposal to add single-use items to the Recycling Regulation? Are there any single-use items you feel should be exempt from the Recycling Regulation?*

Similar to other plastic packaging items, the Recycling Regulation should be more inclusive to materials generated from institutions and commercial businesses as given the current recycling market, recycling options are limited for these generators. Packaging and printed paper should be included in the EPR program regardless of where they are sourced. As well, any single-use items that continue to be produced should be regulated to contain a set percentage of recycled materials and meet a recycling standard.

### ***Expanding Plastic Bottle and Beverage Container Returns***

**Question 1:** *Do you have comments or suggestions on the ministry's proposal to include milk and milk substitutes in the beverage container deposit-refund schedule?*

Gable top containers (i.e. milk, milk alternatives and juice cartons and bottles) are readily accepted under Recycle BC. If recyclable items under the Recycle BC EPR program do not include packaging from institutions and commercial businesses, then the Ministry should consider including these items in the beverage container deposit-refund schedule. Ultimately the goal is to provide convenience to customers to ensure that recyclable items get recycled not disposed of in a landfill.

**Question 2:** *Do you have comments or suggestions on the ministry's proposal to create a uniform 10 cent deposit-refund for all beverage containers?*

Increasing deposit-refunds will drive higher container recovery and contribute to overall waste diversion. Deposit-refunds are an important source of income for many not-for-profit agencies and vulnerable communities and, therefore, these entities will also benefit from an increase.

**Question 3:** *Do you have comments or suggestions on the ministry's proposal to allow refunds to be electronic and paid in an alternative form of cash (e-transfer, cheque, in-store credit, charitable donation, or similar alternatives)?*

Any method that increases convenience to customers and encourages participation and more returns should be promoted with consideration to negative impacts to existing partnering return depots.

### ***Reducing Plastics Overall***

**Question 1:** *What should B.C. consider in the development of a national standard on recycled content and any associated targets?*

Canada's policies should, at a minimum, meet global standards and align with the regulations proposed by the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy. By aligning with other countries, a much larger market creates a greater incentive for research and development for the recycling industry and the creation of better and easier to recycling products.

**Question 2:** Do you have comments or suggestions on any related provincial policies or actions?

Through the SWMP approval process currently before the Minister, the RDN is requesting that the Province grant the RDN authority to require the commercial, institutional and multi-family residential sector to source separate materials (i.e. refuse, recyclable, organics). *Mandatory Source Separation* would put all waste generators on par with what has been happening with single family residents in the RDN for more than a decade. Such authority, granted to the RDN, would help ensure that recyclables and organics do not end up in the landfill. Regulations such as *Mandatory Source Separation* provide local government the tools to achieve provincial and regional waste diversion targets.

The RDN hopes to participate in any follow-up engagement opportunities with regards to the Clean BC – Plastics Action Plan and looks forward to the innovations and updates that follow from this consultation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Ian Thorpe, Board Chair  
Regional District of Nanaimo

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