



George Heyman
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Recycling Regulation Amendments
PO Box 9341 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9M1

30th September 2019

Dear Minister Heyman,
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Re: Plastics Action Plan Policy Consultation Submission

Please find below our submission in relation to the 2019 Plastics Action Plan Consultation.

1.) Bans on Single-use Packaging

Do you think bans on plastic packaging should be implemented in B.C.? What plastic packaging products are a priority for B.C. to ban?

The Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE) believes that bans on several types of single-use plastic packaging should be implemented in B.C. in advance of action by the federal government, mirroring the items that will be banned from the European Union (EU) market by 2021. These items include: expanded polystyrene food containers; expanded polystyrene cups; single-use plastic plates; single-use plastic cutlery; plastic chopsticks; plastic straws; plastic drink stirrers; oxo-degradable plastics; plastic balloon sticks and cotton buds with plastic sticks.

The prevalence of the EU-banned single-use items in coastal litter¹, their harmful impacts on coastal and marine environments, and the fact that they have readily available alternatives, make them a clear priority for B.C. to ban.

AWARE believes that single-use plastic shopping bags should also be banned across the province. Prolific littering of plastic bags² and the harmful impacts on marine wildlife have been well-documented. While a growing number of local governments are developing bans on plastic bags, the implementation of common rather than piecemeal legislation would simplify government administration and business compliance, and increase public awareness and adaptation. A standard minimum charge should be mandated for alternatives, we would suggest this be sufficient to deter use, such as \$.25 per paper bag and \$2.00 per reusable bag as in the City Of Victoria, to encourage customers to bring their own reusable bags rather than simply switch to another effectively single-use option where the cost is not sufficiently discouraging.

¹ Greenpeace Canada highlighted that the top 10 plastic items found during shoreline cleanups for World Cleanup Day on September 15, 2018 in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax were: food wrappers; plastic bottles; cups; bottle caps; shopping bags; lids; straws; stirrers; cutlery and containers. In the 2018 Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, which cleaned

² Plastic bags were the fifth most commonly found plastic litter item on World Cleanup Day, the sixth most common item in the 2018 Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, and the fifth most common item in the International Coastal Cleanup in Canada



Placing a ban on these single-use items in B.C. will encourage businesses to respond to growing consumer awareness, and anticipate and exceed likely future federal regulations, while positioning the province at the leading edge of international action on the global marine plastics crisis. A ban, complemented by consultation, education and support for businesses and consumers, is the most appropriate policy choice given the scale and urgency of this crisis, ensuring comprehensive province-wide change within a relatively short timeframe.

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

AWARE believes that the Government of B.C. should consider bans on the items listed above at the point of sale or distribution to the consumer, to prohibit retail and food and beverage service businesses from providing such items to customers. This would be the simplest and most effective means of implementing the bans for these items at the provincial level.

The 2018 Single-Use Items Waste Composition Study conducted on behalf of Metro Vancouver calculated that the overall disposal rate of cups from the commercial and institutional sectors was 2.25kg per employee, compared with 0.54kg per capita for the single family residential sector, and 1.47kg per capita for multi-family residential sector, with the most commonly disposed cup types being plastic-lined paper hot cups (49.1 per employee), plastic-lined paper cold cups (23.4 per employee), and rigid plastic cups (21.8 per employee). As a result, AWARE believes that a disposal ban should be placed on these three types of cups from the commercial and institutional sectors, to ensure that these items are collected for recycling.

AWARE would also suggest mandating that food and beverage service providers charge a minimum of \$0.25 per plastic-lined paper hot cup and rigid plastic cup to encourage customers to bring their own reusable cup. The Ministry should begin consulting with stakeholders to discuss an eventual ban on these beverage containers, to be replaced by a universal returnable cup deposit scheme. The Scottish government has committed in principle to introducing such a levy, of between 20p and 25p per single-use cup, based on the recommendation of an expert panel on environmental charging to introduce a national, mandatory requirement to sell drinks and disposable cups separately.

If a ban was applied, how should exemptions be considered?

Exemptions for single-use items that are compostable may reduce resistance and be acceptable in locations serviced by commercial composting infrastructure. We would suggest this exemption only apply to well labelled fibre-based compostables and not compostable plastics which are overtly difficult for consumers to correctly identify. Exemptions should also be made in the case of straws to enable businesses to provide compostable options only by request to customers with a disability and/or other accessibility needs.

Bans can be implemented in some form by all levels of government due to the 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?



AWARE believes that a ban on the EU-listed items should ideally and eventually be implemented at the federal level to simplify and standardize legislation, and to maximise reductions in the environmental damage, economic costs, infrastructure pressures and unnecessary resource consumption caused by these items nationwide. However, it is recognised that the nature and extent of action on single-use plastics suggested in the recent announcement by the federal government is still highly uncertain, and subject to significant political and economic pressures. The Government of B.C. is also positioned to respond proactively in the near term to the mounting scientific evidence, rising tide of consumer sentiment, and shifting international environmental standards, and take strong and comprehensive action on the most wasteful and environmentally harmful single-use plastic items. This will provide legislative certainty to the retail and food service industries and to providers of single-use alternatives, driving innovation in products and practices and providing associated economic benefits. When federal bans are eventually implemented, businesses in B.C. will have a market advantage, and be well-positioned to offer their experience and expertise in redesigning products and systems to avoid single-use plastic items to businesses in other provinces and territories.

While AWARE believes that local governments should have the authority to ban plastic items in their community, it would argue that numerous jurisdictions each drafting their own bylaws for a variety of items represents an unnecessary duplication of effort, and inefficient use of limited municipal staff time and resources, and would create a patchwork of inconsistent legislation across the province causing compliance challenges for industry and confusion for customers. AWARE's position is that the B.C. government should seek input from local governments in the process of drafting comprehensive province-wide legislation prohibiting all of the items listed in the E.U. ban, plus plastic bags, and grant them authority to enforce the bans within their respective jurisdictions. Local governments should have the authority to introduce bans on other problematic items in addition to those covered by this legislation, and to petition for the inclusion of these items in future amendments to the legislation. The bans on single-use plastic items currently being implemented or developed by municipalities should be given blanket approval by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and remain in effect until province-wide legislation is introduced that effectively replaces them.

AWARE believes that plastic cigarette filters should be banned at the federal level. In the 2018 Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, cigarette butts were the most commonly found item, with 560,432 picked up, representing 42.1% of the items collected. A study conducted by the University of British Columbia in 2018 that analysed data from 1,226 cleanups organised by the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup along the coast of B.C. between 2013 and 2016 found that cigarettes and cigarette filters accounted for almost 50% of the litter items recovered from coastlines along the southern Strait of Georgia. In the 2017 International Coastal Cleanup organised by Ocean Conservancy, which cleaned 19,392km of coastline around the world, cigarette butts were the most collected item both in Canada and globally, representing 26.0% and 11.6% respectively of the total number of items collected. Since the manufacture, import, labelling and sale of cigarettes are regulated at the federal level by the Tobacco Act, the use of cellulose acetate filters should be prohibited through an amendment to this act.

2.) More recycling options



Do you have comments or suggestions regarding the ministry's proposal to include packaging-like products and single-use items in the Recycling Regulation? Are there any packaging-like products or single-use items you believe should be exempt from the Recycling Regulation?

AWARE supports the proposal to include packaging-like products and single-use items in the Recycling Regulation to make the producers of such products responsible for their collection and recycling after use. This would encourage producers to design and manufacture more easily recyclable products, and require that they provide the collection and recycling infrastructure necessary to ensure that the resources used to make such products are recaptured and reused rather than burdening municipal waste infrastructure or polluting the environment. Minimum recycled content standards should be applied to these categories of items, and the minimum percentages should be relatively high as their performance requirements are low compared to other products.

The 2018 Single-Use Items Waste Composition Study conducted on behalf of Metro Vancouver found that the amount of waste from single-use utensils, straws and cups was significantly higher in the Commercial and Institutional sectors than in the Single Family and Multi-Family Residential sectors. As such, the sectors that producers are required to collect from should include the Institutional and Commercial sectors.

AWARE does not nominate any packaging-like products or single-use items to be exempt from the Recycling Regulation.

3.) Expanding Plastic Bottle and Beverage Container Returns

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

AWARE supports the ministry's proposal to include milk and milk substitutes in the beverage container deposit-refund schedule, to incentivise increased return of the containers used to package these widely consumed products, and to better capture the large amounts of associated packaging generated by the Institutional and Commercial sectors. Including all beverage containers in the deposit-refund system would simplify the sorting and returns process for consumers and program operators, reducing confusion and uncertainty and increasing the recapture and recycling rate.

We would also support:

- Requiring producers to collect and report on the recycling of bottle caps;
- Increasing regulated targets to at least that achieved by Alberta and Saskatchewan, with long-term targets matching the EU; and
- Enforcement of the regulated targets in a meaningful way, such as requiring producers to pay for the clean-up of ocean plastics equal to the amount by weight that they fail to collect and recycle.

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

AWARE supports the ministry's proposal to create a uniform 10 cent deposit-refund for all beverage containers to incentivise the return of more beverage containers for recycling, conserving energy and



resources and increasing diversion from landfills. Making the deposit uniform would simplify the administration of and participation in the program for all involved, encouraging increased returns and requiring less sorting. We would also support moves to increase the deposit-refund higher than 10 cents to further increase returns.

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)?

AWARE supports the ministry's proposal to allow refunds to be electronic and paid in an alternative form of cash, and particularly automated convenience options. This could potentially simplify and streamline the return and refund process, increase the incentive for return for some consumers without increasing the refund amount, reduce barriers and disincentives for return such as perceptions of inconvenience, associate returns with more tangible rewards in the minds of some consumers, and allow consumers to more easily integrate returns into their daily routines. Automated options may also be of greater appeal to younger people, who are more accustomed to and in many cases prefer using electronic and automated systems that maximise speed and convenience.

4.) Reducing Plastics Overall

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

AWARE believes that B.C. should consider advocating for a series of increasing targets for minimum recycled plastic content in products and packaging over time to encourage continual improvement, innovation, investment, and research and development of improved designs and production methods. In addition to the national standard, the federal government could consider influencing the price of virgin and recycled resins through subsidies and taxes to incentivise producers to increase the proportion of recycled plastic they use in products and packaging beyond the minimum standards. A universal labelling system could be developed that requires products and packaging to show the percentage of recycled plastic they contain, to enable consumers to make more informed choices and drive demand for products and packaging with higher recycled content.

The type of product or packaging and the type of plastic used should be considered when setting national standards, acknowledging that some applications and plastics may enable the use of a higher proportion of recycled plastics while others may be more restrictive, based on required engineering, performance and safety specifications. The government could work with resin manufacturers to develop national standards for a variety of performance characteristics of plastics with recycled content, enabling product and packaging producers to select the most appropriate resin types for their intended application that meet the specifications they require.



Association of
Whistler Area Residents
for the Environment

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P.O. Box 1370, Whistler BC V0N 1B0

info@awarewhistler.org | www.awarewhistler.org

We thank you for the opportunity to comment.

The Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment

info@awarewhistler.org | www.awarewhistler.org