

CleanBC Plastics Action Plan – SFU Stakeholder Submission September 30th, 2019

This submission is on behalf of Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) Re-use For Good Task Force. We would like to acknowledge that at Simon Fraser University we live and work on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

In September 2019, SFU introduced our Re-use for Good (RFG) initiative. Re-use for Good is an SFU zero-waste initiative to reduce and eliminate unnecessary single-use plastic products (SUPPs) and integrate reusable alternatives across all campuses. Re-use for Good is part of SFU’s strategy to rethink material use and promote innovative zero-waste solutions. The initiative is led by a Task Force and Advisory group of change-makers from all areas of the institution.

SFU is approaching this as a learning process with the recognition that bold and urgent action is needed to combat the overwhelming inflow of plastic pollution into our environment. SFU encourages the BC Government to take a similar approach to ensure the health of British Columbians and the health of the land that we share.

This submission describes the actions that SFU is taking to reduce plastic pollution and integrate circular economy principles as outlined in the four main areas that CleanBC has identified for feedback. We believe these can be used as examples of best and emerging practice. It also includes concrete actions and recommendations to the province, and quotes from SFU community members.

CleanBC Plastics Action Plan Solution Recommendations

1) Bans on Single-Use Packaging

With the launch of Re-use for Good, SFU is one of the first Universities in Canada to announce plans to eliminate unnecessary single-use plastics and disposable products and the first to announce plans to eliminate all single-use plastic bottles and single-use beverage cups. Re-use for Good is a reduction and elimination plan and not a ban on certain items.

There are four parts to Re-use for Good:

- I. improving campus infrastructure for reusables, including increasing amounts of water-bottle refill stations and adding more dishwashers;

- II. providing the community with more reusable alternatives; like Go Green reusable take-out boxes, converting to reusable cutlery, rescuing lost water bottles, cup and mug share programs, and offering zero-waste catering and events services;
- III. raising awareness about the impacts of SUPPs and the culture of convenience; through engagement events, consultation, presentations, community based social marketing; and ultimately,
- IV. eliminating unnecessary single-use plastics and other disposables on all campuses.

SFU encourages infrastructure development requirements for restaurants, schools, etc for reusable programs (mugshare, take-out containers, etc.). At our institution, we are facing a barrier pertaining to dishwasher infrastructure to process the volume of reusables that we are not offering.

2) Dramatically Reduce Single-Use Plastic in Landfills & Waterways

SFU encourages the BC government to expand their scope of plastics entering our landfills and waterways beyond single-use products to include all macro-plastic sources such as fishing nets, children's stuffed toys, and Styrofoam packaging. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which contains at least 79 thousand tonnes of plastic, is at least [46% comprised of fishing nets](#)¹.

SFU believes that plastic reduction begins at the source and encourages the BC Government to expand and strengthen their EPR programs. End of life responsibility is critical to create a circular economy where nothing is wasted. SFU suggests the creation of a circular economy index or evaluation to inform consumers on the full life-cycle impact of the products they use.

3) Plastic Bottle and Beverage Container Returns

SFU is supportive of the ministry's proposal to create a uniform 10 cent deposit-refund for all beverage containers. **However, we believe that this price is too low and encourage the ministry to increase their deposit-refund.** This [report](#)² from Ocean Legacy Foundation highlights the success of EU countries with higher regulated deposits such as Germany which has reached a 98% return rate of PET bottles with a €0.25Eur / \$0.37CAD deposit.

While return programs are beneficial, SFU also notes that we support the elimination of plastics where more recyclable alternatives, such as aluminum, exist. British Columbia has the opportunity to lead

¹ Lebreton, L., Slat, B., Ferrari, F., Sainte-Rose, B., Aitken, J., Marthouse, R., ... Reisser, J. (2018). Evidence that the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is rapidly accumulating plastic. *Scientific Reports*, 8(1). doi: 10.1038/s41598-018-22939-w

² The Ocean Legacy Foundation. (2019, April 25). British Columbia's Beverage Container Legacy: The Missing Millions. Retrieved from https://oceanlegacy.ca/foundation/wp-content/uploads/Missing_Millions-OLF_2019-REPORT.pdf

industry away from plastics and incentivize businesses to innovate zero-waste plastic-free options for beverage containers and more.

Reusable share programs can eliminate the need for single-use options. At SFU we are piloting a [GoGreen](#) container program to eliminate the need for disposable take-out food containers, as well as a [TumblerShare](#) program to remove the need for a take-out coffee cups.

4) Reducing Plastics Overall

As a university, we are faced with disposing plastics from a variety of sources. Beyond commonly mentioned single-use items such as food containers or plastic beverage containers, we would like to see a reduction in plastic packaging for items such as new electronics, IT equipment, furniture, lab equipment etc.

SFU sees this CleanBC Plastics Action Plan as an opportunity for the ministry to commit to a completely circular economy where the focus is placed on rethinking, reusing, repairing, returning and recycling.

Provincial Policy & Action Recommendations

- I. SFU strongly encourages the BC Government to co-create and consult with disabled people and people with various access needs throughout this process.
 - A. SFU recommends the BC government to allocate funding towards ensuring accessibility for all British Columbians from the initial planning stages which should include broad consultation with a diverse range of disabled and low-income communities
 - B. SFU recommends the BC Government hire disabled and low-income BC residents to form an accessibility task force that acts on the above recommendation
 - C. SFU recommends the BC Government provides a range of alternatives and solutions to plastic waste that will meet the variety of accessibility needs of BC residents
 - D. SFU recommends the BC Government to ensure that accessibility information about sustainability initiatives is simple, clear, and widely available
- II. SFU encourages infrastructure development requirements for restaurants, schools, etc for reusable programs (mugshare, take-out containers, etc.). At our institution, we are facing a barrier pertaining to dishwasher infrastructure to process the volume of reusables that we are not offering.
- III. SFU strongly supports embedding a minimization (versus diversion or reuse) and/or circular economy approach and foundation to all policy and program changes related to plastics pollution.
- IV. SFU strongly recommends that the Province provide low barrier grant funding for the following to reduce plastic use on our campuses and simultaneously improve our zero-waste solutions:
 - A. Research and development of circular economy products
 - B. Large-scale share programs (mug share, container share, etc.)



- C. Testing pilot zero-waste products
- D. Funding for nonprofits, social enterprises, community groups and other organizations that are working toward zero-waste solutions
- V. SFU recommends the province to target a 100% recycling rate on plastics.
- VI. SFU supports including commonly used single-use plastics (with the exception of those required for accessibility purposes), and/or other plastics that have significant environmental, social, and economic impacts under the *Environmental Management Act (EMA)*.

SFU Stakeholder Comments

“As a young person and an environment student, I often find myself petrified at the realities of climate breakdown and its resulting feedbacks. However, it is inspiring to see SFU truly committed to implementing circular economy practices. I believe that strong action from the BC Government in their Plastics Action Plan will inspire young British Columbians to continue to find creative solutions to our current environmental issues. I urge the province to take bold and urgent action to eliminate plastics.”
- Teghan Acres, Undergraduate Student

"In light of the ever-increasing impact that humans are having on our planet, we must seriously acknowledge that we are too often driven by the convenience of single use products. As part of the SFU community, we can have an impact on the future of our Earth by collectively getting excited and taking concrete actions in our daily decisions. It has been moving to witness stakeholders all over campus pull together and combating this issue, and take this immense step towards a greener future. I urge the government of British Columbia to equally acknowledge this reality, take immediate action, and be an example for the young generation facing the realities of our changing planet.” - Lucian Rinke-Hardekopf, Director of University Relations, Graduate Student Society.

SFU Resources

[Sustainability - Simon Fraser University](#)

[SFU's Sustainability Commitments](#)

[SFU Sustainability Office](#)

[Re-use for Good Initiative](#)

[Re-use for Good Initiative Press Release](#)

[GoGreen Container Program](#)