



POLICY REPORT

Report Date: May 1, 2018
Contact: Albert Shames
Contact No.: 604.873.7300
RTS No.: 12140
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: May 16, 2018

TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy, as attached in Appendix A, and direct staff to proceed with implementation.
- B. THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment amendments to the License By-law (No. 4450) and Ticket Offense By-law (No. 9360), generally in accordance with Appendix C, prohibiting the distribution of prepared foods in polystyrene foam cups and containers by business license holders beginning November 1, 2019.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to conduct a communications and engagement campaign on the proposed by-law amendments referred to in Recommendation B, and identify opportunities for the City to support affected businesses and other organizations in the transition away from polystyrene foam cups and containers.
- D. THAT Council approve, in principle, a regulation prohibiting the distribution of single-use plastic straws by business license holders beginning November 1, 2019 and:
 - i. direct staff to consult with affected businesses, appropriate civic agencies, community health groups and other organizations and report back by December 31, 2018 on a plastic straw prohibition implementation plan; and
 - ii. instruct the Director of Legal Services to prepare proposed License By-law amendments to be included in the report back referred to in Recommendation D (i).

- E. THAT Council direct staff to consult business license holders on proposed by-law requirements for plastic and paper bags and disposable cups referred to in the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy in Appendix A, and bring forward by-law changes as part of the annual Solid Waste Rate Report in late 2018.
- F. THAT Council direct staff to circulate the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy to the Metro Vancouver Regional District, the British Columbia Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy, and Environment and Climate Change Canada, and take steps to engage those governments as partners in the implementation of the strategy.

REPORT SUMMARY

Over the past two years, the City has worked with residents and businesses through extensive consultation to develop a made-in-Vancouver strategy for reducing the use of single-use items. The strategy proposed includes bold actions to reduce use of plastic and paper bags, polystyrene foam take-out containers and cups, disposable hot and cold drink cups, take-out food containers, and disposable straws and utensils.

The proposed strategy includes early by-law enactments to prohibit plastic straws and polystyrene cups and take out containers, as well as requiring reduction plans to reduce use of plastic and paper bags and disposable cups. A number of secondary actions support moving toward greater standardization of waste reduction policies, such as working towards ensuring single-use items are compostable or recyclable in local programs, and providing support for Metro Vancouver's work to develop a Regional Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy.

These will be supplemented by supportive actions such as education for businesses and consumers, pilot programs, and enabling infrastructure and services (e.g. travel mug and reusable container exchange programs). The actions would provide support, enable decisions, and grow the systems, capacity, innovation, and incentives needed to support Vancouver residents, businesses, and community organizations in reducing their use of single-use items and recycling or composting what remains.

The business community was strongly supportive of actions around bags and cups. They requested though some flexibility in the reduction requirements to allow them to adapt the program to their unique business practices and facility layout while still requiring them to take action. The proposed regulatory requirements for bags and cups allow a degree of flexibility in establishing a reduction program while placing all businesses on a level playing field regarding overall requirements and not overly penalize small businesses.

The strategy proposes that the City work with businesses and the community on implementation, and support the transitions needed.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On July 12, 2011, Council adopted the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan which includes a long term goal to create zero waste, and a target to reduce total solid waste going to landfill and incinerator by 50% from 2008 levels.

On November 3, 2015, Council adopted Part Two: 2015-2020 of the Greenest City Action Plan with a zero waste priority action to reduce street litter and increase the diversion of single use materials by implementing a comprehensive litter management strategy.

On February 3, 2016, Council directed staff to investigate and report back on regulatory options to address the distribution, use, and recycling of commonly disposed items designed for single use, including coffee cups, plastic shopping bags and expanded polystyrene fast food packaging, including exploring options to restrict or ban the use of these products.

On May 31, 2016, Council directed staff to undertake a Zero Waste 2040 Strategy that develops a framework to achieve the Greenest City long term goal of creating zero waste by 2040.

On June 27, 2017, Council directed staff to report back with the results of Single Use Item Strategy stakeholder consultation and public engagement.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

There is growing momentum to take action on single-use items both locally and internationally among zero waste pioneers in businesses, universities, advocacy groups, and multiple levels of government. Many local Metro-based organizations and businesses have taken bold steps towards eliminating single-use items, including several pilot projects currently underway in the City of Vancouver.

Internationally, numerous other governments and multi-national businesses are implementing policies to drastically reduce the resources consumed and waste created by single-use items. Increasingly there is recognition of the need to address the societal issues associated with demand for single-use items. In particular, there is momentum building amongst grassroots organizations around the globe with a focus on marine plastic pollution.

Plastic pollution in the oceans is a major global issue. As a coastal city, the quality of the ocean, beaches and natural surroundings are of great importance to Vancouver and the City continues to play a leadership role. The Vancouver Aquarium is the headquarter of the global OceanWise® initiative, through which groundbreaking research is conducted on how plastics affect marine life — including the effects of fragments of single-use plastic items like fast food containers, coffee cup lids, coffee cup liners, straws and plastic bags.

Programs such as the Recycle BC residential recycling program, Encorp deposit-refund system, the City's recycling depots and Metro Vancouver's disposal bans on some items are steps forward. There is however a need for further action by the City as we move towards zero waste. The Single Use Item Strategy is an early priority and transformative action for becoming a zero waste community, and a further step forward in reducing our reliance on disposal and addressing the challenges associated with litter and waste entering the marine environment.

REPORT

Background/Context

The Need for a Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy

Zero Waste 2040, a long-term strategic plan responding to Council's direction for Vancouver to become a zero waste community by 2040, will be submitted to Council for adoption on May 16, 2018. Zero Waste 2040 is designed to guide future solid waste decisions, and identifies the adoption of a single-use item reduction strategy as both an early priority and transformative action to tackle a deep-rooted zero waste challenge faced by all sectors in Vancouver.

Single-use item waste is generated in staggering amounts, is highly visible in the public realm, and is a significant component of street and shoreline litter. Approximately 57 million straws are used in Canada every day. Every week, 2.6 million disposable polycarbonate cups (e.g. coffee cups) are thrown away in garbage in Vancouver. Cups and take-out containers make up about 50% of all items collected in public waste bins and are a significant portion of litter on Vancouver streets and shorelines. Plastic bags have become a major focal point recently due to their persistence and impact on the marine environment. Perhaps not surprisingly, 86% of Vancouver residents see the importance of reducing single-use items.

Despite their convenience, these single-use items:

- Cost Vancouver taxpayers about \$2.5 million per year to collect from public waste bins and to clean up as litter in our parks, streets and green spaces;
- Are often not recycled or composted;
- Take up valuable space in our landfill;
- Have a lasting impact on our environment long after being used for a short period of time; and,
- Require a significant amount of resources to produce

In support of the goal to become a zero waste community, and following Council direction, staff have developed a Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy focussed on reducing waste from:

- Plastic and paper shopping bags
- Polystyrene foam take-out containers and cups
- Disposable hot and cold drink cups
- Take-out food containers
- Disposable straws and utensils

Policy Context

In Canada there is a mix of regulatory authority over the use of single-use items and the waste stemming from them. Each level of government has a role to play in the future management of single-use item waste, and has different policy tools at their disposal to take action:

- Local (municipal) governments are generally responsible for delivering collection services to residents and maintaining the quality of the public realm by collecting litter from cans and general litter clean up.
- The City of Vancouver also has significant legislative authority over businesses, solid waste and health matters.

- Recycling programs for residential packaging and printed paper materials are covered under provincially regulated extended producer responsibility¹ (EPR) programs, but the same materials disposed of at businesses are not. As a result single-use items taken to a place of work as part of our day-to-day activities generally end up in the garbage.
- Regional governments are generally responsible for waste planning and overseeing transfer stations and recycling and composting facilities.
- Provincial governments set legislation regarding EPR programs, regional solid waste planning and health code requirements for food premises (e.g. setting sanitary requirements for reusable food and drink containers).
- The federal government is responsible for cross-border movement of waste materials, and can set charters for specific waste-reduction initiatives.

For more details about the responsibilities and example actions of each level of government, please see the Policy Context section of the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy (Appendix A).

Momentum is Building

The Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy (Appendix A) includes a list of example actions being taken by zero waste leaders locally and globally. Some highlights include:

- Many grocery stores and pharmacies in Vancouver charge fees on plastic and paper bags. In April 2018, Recycle BC and Retail Council of Canada published a guide to support all retailers to reduce single-use shopping bags. Recycle BC and local retailers also launched a #BringYourOwnBag campaign.
- Many local restaurants are going strawless, including some bubble tea locations that have also introduced reusable cups.
- Local universities have introduced reusable take-out container options at select food service locations on their campuses, similar to the Go Box program in Portland.
- Travel mug exchange programs have emerged in New York City and Germany.
- Over 100 cities in the US have banned the use of polystyrene foam cups and containers.
- Multi-national fast food restaurants and coffee shops have announced plans to introduce compostable packaging or ensure all locations have in-store recycling.
- The Government of Canada is exploring options to work towards zero plastic waste and has announced plans to raise this issue with G7 countries.
- In Canada, the National Zero Waste Council is focusing on developing circular economy opportunities, as are other organizations around the world.

Public/Civic Agency Input

To gather input and feedback on actions to include in the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy, City staff launched three phases of public and stakeholder engagement.

¹ Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a regulatory approach whereby producers (manufacturers, sellers, brand-owners and first importers) are responsible for managing their products and packaging across the full life-cycle, from selection of materials and design, to funding and managing recycling programs at the end of the product's life.

Phase 1: Zero Waste 2040 Workshop on Single-Use Items

Consultation for the draft Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy began on October 28, 2016, when the City hosted a workshop with residents, businesses, non-profit organizations, and other levels of government to gather input on single-use foam food packaging, disposable cups, plastic and paper shopping bags, and take-out containers. The information gathered and ideas generated at this initial meeting supported a local call for a Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy and informed staff in developing potential approaches to address this waste in Vancouver. Key engagement strategies for Phase 1 included a full-day workshop, and a web page with information and key facts about single-use item waste in Vancouver and around the world.

Over 65 people participated in the workshop. To view the Phase 1 draft Single-Use Item Strategy Workshop consultation summary, see Appendix B-1.

Phase 2: In-depth stakeholder consultation & public engagement

From June 2017 through February 2018, the City carried out an in-depth consultation and engagement process to connect with stakeholders and members of the public to better understand why single-use items are used, test support for various options under consideration and engage through in-person and online dialogue about the future of single-use items in Vancouver. Key stakeholder consultation activities included a consultation paper that was available online and in print (Appendix B-2), 10 in-person roundtable discussions (of which 8 took place at Vancouver community centres, and two others took place in Toronto and Montreal to coincide with industry gathering for the Conference on Canadian Stewardship and a national meeting of retailers), an online comment form, in-person meetings and a dedicated project email address. Key public engagement activities included a pop-up engagement storefront at 511 West Broadway, online Talk Vancouver survey, a dedicated project email address, social media, a booth at the Vancouver School Board Student Sustainability Conference and attendance at the following five City of Vancouver's Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings:

- Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee
- Cultural Communities Advisory Committee
- Food Policy Council and Food Policy Council Sub-Committee Waste Working Group
- Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- Seniors' Advisory Committee

Over 6,500 people participated in this phase of consultation, exceeding the target of 5,000 touchpoints. To view the Phase 2 Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy consultation summary, please see Appendix B-3.

Phase 3: Reporting back to stakeholders and the public on the Draft Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy and gathering feedback on emerging priority actions

In March and April 2018, the City reported back to stakeholders and the public on the results of the consultation and sought feedback on the emerging priority actions outlined in the Draft Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy, which was published on March 29, 2018. During this third phase of consultation, the City made a targeted effort to reach out to smaller local businesses that had not participated during Phase 2 and would be affected by the emerging policy directions in the draft strategy. To do so, the City partnered with local agencies to gather an initial understanding of culturally-specific challenges and opportunities that reflect the diverse range of ethno-cultural food businesses affected by the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy.

Key stakeholder consultation activities included advanced information on the website, an online link to the Draft Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy with an accompanying online comment form and two separate small-business oriented meetings held on April 11, at 511 W. Broadway. To ensure language accessibility, a dedicated feedback phone line was also provided with third-party translations in Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi and Vietnamese, as well as hand-delivered notification letters sent to restaurant owners in high traffic neighborhoods across the city. Key public engagement activities included emails to the project listserv with the web links to the Draft Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy and accompanying online comment form, a dedicated project email address, social media and a public open house on April 10, at 511 W. Broadway. Nearly 1,450 people engaged in Phase 3 of the consultation. To view the Phase 3 Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy consultation summary, please see Appendix B-4.

Total Participation

In total, the consultation and engagement reached over 8,000 touch points.

Table 1. Consultation and Engagement for the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy

Phase	Activity	Participants
Phase 1	Zero Waste 2040 Single Use Item Workshop	67
	Total Phase 1	67
Phase 2	Stakeholder Consultation	
	Roundtable meetings	233
	Consultation paper written responses	29
	Other stakeholder meetings, discussions, and events	258
	Subtotal	520
	Public Engagement	
	CoV Citizen Advisory Committee meetings	89
	City Lab pop-up engagement space	715
	Talk Vancouver survey	3,163
	VSB Student Sustainability Conference	80
Listserv emails	168	
Social media interactions (likes, comments, shares)	804	
Subtotal	5,019	
	Opinion Research	1,000
Subtotal	1,000	
	Total Phase 2	6,539
Phase 3	Stakeholder Consultation	
	Small business and industry meetings	43
	Interviews with small ethnocultural businesses with translation services through consultants	31
	Other stakeholder meetings	22
	Formal letters from stakeholders	7
	Calls to 3-1-1 on dedicated phone line with translation services	3
	Subtotal	106
	Public Engagement	
	Online comment form	189
	Open House	70
Comments received through email	18	
Social media interactions (likes, comments, shares)	1,065	
Subtotal	1,342	
	Total Phase 3	1,448
	TOTAL	8,054

Strategic Analysis

Early By-law Actions

The strategy includes the following three early by-law actions:

1. Prohibit the distribution of prepared foods in expanded polystyrene foam cups and containers by business license holders beginning November 1, 2019

Description: This action involves an amendment to the License By-law, which will require that business license holders do not sell or otherwise provide prepared food in polystyrene foam cups or take-out containers beginning November 1, 2019. This timeline allows City staff to work with businesses, social service agencies and institutions to address their concerns around the need for support with the effective transition. City staff will develop materials and support the business community and other organizations in choosing acceptable substitute materials, including convening stakeholders to share information and learn from each other.

Should industry develop a viable recycling alternative during the transition period prior to the by-law coming into effect, staff will report back to Council on any changes to timing or scope of the by-law that could be considered.

Rationale: While clean expanded polystyrene foam is technically a recyclable material, it must be collected and managed separately from other materials. Residents can recycle foam at Recycle BC depots, but not in the curbside or multi-family program, as it breaks and crumbles easily during the collection process. The broken pieces are difficult to separate from other recyclables and this mixture of materials is incompatible with the recycling process, meaning that neither the foam nor the other materials can be recycled properly.

Expanding streetscape recycling programs to include polystyrene is also not a viable option due to the food contamination. There is no collection system or market in place to handle food-contaminated containers. Residents can take their containers home, clean them and recycle clean foam materials at Recycle BC depots and participating stores, however, only 6% of Vancouver residents say they would be willing to take foam cups and take-out containers to a designated location for recycling. As a result, this material will still end up disposed in the public realm, potentially ending up in the marine environment or ultimately disposed at the landfill or incinerator.

Many businesses that use foam cups and containers are small businesses that are exempt from the B.C. Recycling Regulation (B.C. Reg. 206/2017), the provincial regulation that requires EPR for packaging and printed paper, and so they do not pay into Recycle BC's program.

Without a viable program for recovering and recycling expanded polystyrene foam cups and take-out containers, or the willingness of residents to clean and deliver these materials to depots for recycling, a prohibition on the distribution of these materials is recommended.

Feedback: During Phase 2 of the consultation, City staff heard strong support from the public for a ban on the use of polystyrene foam cups and take-out containers.

- 77% of Talk Vancouver survey respondents supported a ban on the distribution of polystyrene foam cups and take-out containers.
- A public opinion survey conducted by NRG Research on behalf of the City found that 78% of respondents supported a ban on foam cups and containers.
- 90% of individuals who filled out a comment form at the engagement storefront supported a ban on foam cups and containers, noting that recycling options for these items were not easily accessible.
- In Phase 3 of the consultation, the public through the online comment form and at the public open house once again expressed strong support for a ban on single-use polystyrene foam and wanted to see it implemented quickly.
- 82% of Vancouver residents say they would be willing to pay more for single-use items that were reusable or that could be recycled with their residential curbside program or apartment building recycling program.

However, not all stakeholders shared these views.

City staff received opposing feedback from plastic industry representatives who advocated for improved foam collection and recycling processing to avoid a ban single-use foam cups and containers. Some restaurateurs, while understanding the environmental impacts, noted concerns around food safety and the increase in operating costs associated with purchasing non-foam cups and take-out containers. For some stakeholders, there was also an underlying belief that customers were not willing to pay additional money to help businesses recuperate the cost switching from foam to alternative packaging.

2. Prohibit the distribution of single-use plastic straws by business license holders beginning November 1, 2019

Description: This action involves an amendment to the License By-law, which will prohibit business license holders from distributing single-use plastic straws beginning November 1, 2019. Before preparing the by-law amendment, City staff will further consult with appropriate civic agencies, community health groups, affected businesses and stakeholders to identify opportunities to support the transition, accommodate health care needs, and ensure any unintended consequences are addressed. Staff will report back to Council with an implementation plan by December 31, 2018.

Rationale: The draft strategy initially proposed a by-law amendment to require food vendors to ask if customers would like a straw. After reviewing the Phase 3 consultation feedback, staff concluded that a customer prompt or by-request by-law was not practical and may not adequately address the problem of plastic straws in litter and marine environments. As a result, the recommendation in the final strategy is a prohibition on single-use plastic straws.

Feedback: During Phase 2 of consultations, City staff heard suggestions during the roundtable discussions, at the engagement storefront and through our dedicated project emails to include plastic straws within our defined project scope. The City also received a petition to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic straws in Vancouver. The petition was coordinated by a local organization called Drop the Straw and, as of March 20, 2018, had over 110 signatures from restaurants in Vancouver that are supportive of stricter policies regarding the unnecessary use of plastic straws. Based on this feedback, and in light of a

growing global movement to reduce plastic straws in restaurants and liquor establishments, single-use straws were included in the strategy. During this time, staff also heard from the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, the Seniors Advisory Committee and social service providers in the Downtown Eastside, who signalled the need to allow for durable straws to accommodate important musculoskeletal and oral health care needs in any policy aimed at restricting straws.

During Phase 3 of consultation, stakeholders and the public were consulted more broadly on single-use straws and the potential for a customer prompt by-law that would require businesses to ask customers if they would like a straw. Businesses that offer beverages “to go” noted that a customer prompt or by-request by-law would be impractical for their business models and would likely aggravate customers. Some environmental groups and the public stated that the prompt by-law did not go far enough to eliminate unnecessary plastic waste and litter. Out of all single-use items covered in the strategy, the reduction of straws was highly supported by both the public and stakeholder groups. In some instances, business owners reported that they had already begun to only provide straws when requested by customers. However, certain businesses that rely on a particular type of straw for their product (e.g. bubble tea shops) raised concerns about the impact on their business.

3. Reduction plans for disposable cups and plastic and paper shopping bags

Description: Business license holders that use disposable cups and plastic and paper bags will be required to significantly reduce the amount of these items they distribute. Business license holders will be able to choose their approach for achieving reduction from a list of options, including:

- i. Distribute no disposable cups or plastic/paper shopping bags
- ii. Do not distribute disposable cups or plastic/paper shopping bags for free
- iii. Other mechanisms that achieve a reduction target to be proposed and finalized through consultation

The third option invites businesses to be innovative in their efforts to reduce distribution of cups and bags, and develop an approach that works best for the type and size of their business. These approaches might include: incentive programs, discounts for customers who use reusable cups or bags, customer requests before distributing cups or bags, and loyalty programs for customers who bring reusable cups or bags. Businesses that choose the third option will be required to demonstrate they meet a reduction target set by the City, which will be proposed and finalized through consultation with affected businesses and other organizations.

Businesses that choose the second option and charge a fee on disposable cups and plastic and paper shopping bags will keep that fee as part of their business revenue. (It would not be a tax paid to the City.) Fees charged on disposable cups and paper and plastic bags could conceivably be used to cover the producer fees paid to Recycle BC.

All businesses will be required to track and report the amount of disposable cups and plastic and paper bags they distribute, regardless of which option they choose from the list.

Rationale: The reduction plan by-law is modelled after the flexible approach in the Solid Waste By-law (No. 8417), which requires property owners to have diversion plans for

organic (compostable) waste and recyclable materials, and provides a range of choices to satisfy this requirement. For plastic and paper bags, and disposable cups, the reduction plan approach sets a clear direction for the business community while allowing flexibility, welcoming innovation and inviting businesses to continue being active participants on the road to zero waste.

A key component of the reduction by-law is that it would require business to report their distribution of plastic and paper bags. Having this data will allow staff to set appropriate targets and monitor progress over time—a key difference compared to regulation in other jurisdictions.

The strategy does not propose an *immediate* plastic bag ban and/or specific fees on bags or cups, but it does commit to reviewing the need for these tools in 2021-2025 if dramatic reduction is not achieved.

Plastic Bags

Other jurisdictions have prohibited the distribution of thin plastic bags and/or set mandatory fees for various types of bags.

Staff research indicates that, on its own, a plastic bag ban is not effective at reaching the end goal of dramatically reducing single-use plastic and paper bags. Most other jurisdictions ban only *thin* plastic bags (defined in mil, i.e. one thousandth of an inch, or microns), which are considered single-use, and often only bags distributed by grocery stores and pharmacies. For example, California, Montreal and the Counties of Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii have banned thin plastic bags.

Instead of shifting consumer behaviour towards reusable bags, research indicates that thin plastic bags get replaced by thicker “reusable” plastic bags or paper bags. Thicker plastic bags must be reused 5 to 9 times to have a lower environmental impact than thin plastic bags, but limited research suggests that very few consumers reuse thicker plastic bags this many times. Consumers tend to treat thicker plastic bags like single-use items, and the bags are still littered and make their way into marine environments.

In British Columbia, the City of Victoria has attempted to ban all plastic bags, but this has been challenged by the Canadian Plastic Bag Association and the matter is currently before the courts. Rwanda has banned all plastic bags, but even with strong enforcement including border patrols, fines, prison sentences and public shaming, a black market still exists for smuggled plastic bags.

Portland, Oregon reported a 491% increase in the use of paper bags one year after banning plastic bags thinner than 4 mils in 2011. However, paper bags are a poor substitute for plastic bags because they have higher greenhouse gas emissions, higher human toxicity impacts, and higher terrestrial ecotoxicity impacts than plastic bags. This is primarily due to paper production processes, and because paper bags are heavier than plastic bags and require more fuel to transport. Paper bags are the better environmental choice only if they get reused 4 to 7 times; however, limited research on the subject indicates there is no significant reuse of paper bags, likely because they are not durable.

Significant reduction results for plastic bags have been observed in jurisdictions with mandatory fees or taxes. Ireland charges a 22 euro cent (CAD \$0.34) levy on plastic

bags, resulting in 96% reduction. England and Wales require a 5-pence (CAD \$0.09) fee on thin plastic grocery bags, and report 83% and 71% reduction respectively. In Feb. 2017, Chicago switched from a ban on thin plastic bags (introduced in 2015) to a 7-cent tax on plastic and paper bags to combat the substitution of unregulated thicker plastic bags, resulting in 40% reduction in just the first month. Scotland, Washington DC, and Portland, Maine, also require fees on bags.

Combinations of bans and fees are common on the west coast. In 2011, Seattle banned the distribution of thin plastic bags (less than 2.25 mils thick) and required a US \$0.05 fee be charged on paper bags, resulting in a 50% reduction in plastic bags disposed in the residential garbage between 2010 and 2014, and a 78% decrease in the amount of plastic bags collected in commercial and self-haul waste streams. California implemented a state-wide ban on thin plastic bags in 2016 from certain types of stores (grocery stores, retail stores with a pharmacy, convenience stores, food marts, liquor stores), with a 10-cent fee for paper bags. According to data from shoreline clean-up events across California, there was a 63% reduction of all plastic bags from 2010 to 2017. However, it is difficult to assess overall reduction of bags in California, as many local jurisdictions already had bag restrictions in place, and no metrics were available that measure plastic bag use or disposal at the state level.

At this time, reduction plans are the recommended approach in the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy for driving reduction. The reduction plan by-law amendment will offer business license holders flexibility and choice, and *target all plastic and paper bags across all business license holders in the City*—not just grocery stores and pharmacies, but also, for example, hardware, apparel, department stores, etc. . Staff will monitor results based on data collected, and assess if further regulatory action is needed three years after the by-law amendments come into effect.

Disposable Cups

Currently there is no precedent for regulation or data on reduction results for disposable cups. Staff research indicates that only Taiwan has announced plans to ban disposable cups, but in 2030. In March 2018, the United Kingdom considered but declined to introduce a 25-pence “latte levy” on disposable cups or to ban them by 2023. In 2009, the City of Toronto explored, but did not adopt, a policy to require vendors to offer a \$0.20 discount on hot drinks sold in reusable cups.

The reduction plan requirement in the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy is a bold first step towards reducing disposable cups in Vancouver. Further consultation is needed with industry and the business community to determine an appropriate reduction target before a by-law amendment is presented to Council.

Feedback: This priority action responds to stakeholder feedback during Phase 2 of consultation. City staff heard from numerous businesses that they strongly support the reduction of these materials and are willing to take action, however a regulatory structure that allows them some flexibility to develop a program that fits within their facility size, configuration and customer approach would help large and small businesses alike—particularly those with multiple locations where they can put in place a program that will work across multiple jurisdictions.

The reduction plan requirement for bags and cups was generally well-received by stakeholders during Phase 3 of consultation. However, there were concerns around an unspecified fee and how businesses would determine a rate that was consistent with their competitors as well as customer satisfaction. The public was less supportive of the reduction plan for plastic and paper shopping bags, opting for stronger action like a plastic bag ban, or higher fees at point of sale for paper bags to support behaviour change, as the use of reusable bags have become common practice for many consumers.

Other Priority Actions

In addition to the early by-law amendments described above, the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy includes other priority actions that generally fall into the following categories.

- **Require that business license holders only provide disposable utensils when requested by customers.** The strategy proposes to amend the License By-law to require that business license holders do not provide disposable utensils unless customers request them. In Phase 3 of the consultation, stakeholders and the public expressed a desire for additional action on disposable utensils. Single-use items are often distributed by businesses as the default option, which puts the responsibility on customers to refuse these items. Giving out single-use items only if asked resets the default behaviour to avoidance of single-use items. 71% of public opinion survey respondents indicated they would reduce their use of single-use items if they had to ask instead of automatically receiving them.
- **Require that special event permit holders do not provide prepared food in expanded polystyrene foam cups or containers.** The strategy proposes to explore opportunities to require that prepared food is not distributed in expanded polystyrene foam cups and containers at festivals and other special events held on City property, which regulated through permits rather than business licenses. This action ensures consistent policy towards expanded polystyrene foam.
- **Standardize materials for recycling or composting.** There is a need to ensure single-use items can be successfully recycled or composted by local processors. There are no consistent established standards for what constitutes recyclable or compostable materials, and there is no guarantee that materials marketed as recyclable, compostable, or biodegradable can successfully be processed in local facilities. Consultation revealed that stakeholders are unsure what kinds of packaging they should buy that would align with local haulers and processors.

City staff will work with industry and the provincial government to contribute to the development of provincial standards and policy for compost facilities, compost quality, and compostable items.

- **Introduce a requirement for single-use items to be recyclable or compostable.** One of the strategy goals is to ensure that when single-use items are used, they can be recycled or composted. Many businesses are already using recyclable and compostable items, requiring all businesses to do so could help to establish a level playing field. Before making recyclability and compostability mandatory, there is a need to address the following issues:

- Lack of consistent established standards for what constitutes a recyclable or compostable item.
 - Lack of assurance that materials designed and marketed as recyclable or compostable can successfully be processed in local facilities.
 - Compostable and recyclable materials often get mixed up when discarded, contaminating both streams and making them impossible to process. This means they get disposed to landfill or incinerator.
- **Require businesses to provide on-site recycling and/or composting for single-use items.** In support of the goal to increase the recovery of single-use items for recycling and composting, the strategy includes by-law amendments to require businesses that distribute single-use items, as well as offices and workplaces, to provide collection programs for recovering these materials. However, this action relies on availability of markets for the collected materials, communications efforts, and working with waste haulers to promote program development.
 - **Work with the provincial government to pursue EPR for single-use items from all sectors.** Areas under provincial control include the implementation and expansion of EPR programs, including those which involve deposit-refund programs. The strategy proposes to engage producers and the B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy in a dialogue to require EPR for compostable plastic single-use items, and all single-use items generated on industrial, commercial and institutional property.

While the provincial EPR regulation (B.C. Recycling Regulation) does not distinguish between recyclable or compostable packaging, the current EPR program focuses on recyclable packaging. There is also an opportunity to ensure EPR is in place for compostable packaging to require compostable packaging producers bear end-of-life responsibility for their packaging, and stimulate investment and innovation in compost systems that can process their packaging. For example, the Recycle BC program stimulated investment and innovation in local packaging collection and processing, and supported local end-markets.

- **Investigate options for recovering the cost of public realm cleanliness costs related to single-use items through businesses that generate them.** City staff will explore proportional cost recovery opportunities to incentivize reduction and recover a portion of street cleaning costs. Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) expressed an interest in deposit-refund programs, and as part of this action, staff will explore whether a deposit-refund program on disposable cups can help to decrease street cleaning costs by reducing street litter.
- **Provide support for Metro Vancouver’s work to develop a Regional Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy.** Metro Vancouver staff are developing actions for reducing single-use items that would be best implemented at a regional level for reasons of efficiency, consistency and municipal equity throughout the region. During Phase 2 consultation, businesses expressed a desire for harmonization across municipalities on a single-use item reduction strategy. City staff are participating in Metro Vancouver’s consultation process by sharing the research, consultation and engagement planning and results, and communications materials for developing the City’s Single-Use Item

Reduction Plan. Metro Vancouver staff anticipate reporting back to their Board of Directors in late 2018 or early 2019 with recommendations for a regional strategy.

- **Support Environment and Climate Change Canada’s work to develop a national single-use plastics reduction strategy.** On April 22, 2018, the federal government, through Environment and Climate Change Canada, launched consultation for input on how Canada can move towards zero plastic waste and marine litter, including from single-use items. Staff will participate in the consultation process and provide comments consistent with recommendations Council approves with respect to the enclosed Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy.
- **Education and outreach.** More education and outreach was the most commonly supported action by both stakeholders and the public. Different approaches will be employed to respond to the unique needs of both the public and businesses. The problems posed by single-use items are decades in the making and through consultation, staff heard there is a need to shift societal norms to support lasting behaviour change.

There is an opportunity for the City to provide more tools, information and training to support peer-to-peer and business-to-business engagement, including materials on the City website and a Zero Waste Ambassador volunteer program. Businesses stressed the need for language-appropriate information to help with their transition and would like guidelines for best practices on product selection, training and assistance with reporting. Stakeholders expressed desire for the City to conduct and share further research on product selection and environmental impacts of different material choices.

Furthermore, the City received feedback from both public and stakeholders around the importance of social media to market and connect with influencers, business owners and customers on consumer awareness, the costs associated with single-use items, and the need to bring your own reusable items. Businesses would like a social media campaign to be timed with future recommendations and by-law changes to support restaurants in this transition.

- **Collaboration and dialogue.** Overcoming the challenges facing Vancouver in the pursuit of zero waste requires dialogue and collaboration within the whole community, including the City, businesses, the public, academia, community organizations and all levels of government. Consultation revealed a strong desire for businesses to work alongside the City to support efforts to reduce single-use items. Staff heard that stakeholders would like to continue the in-depth conversations started during consultation about the best options for reducing single-use items and expressed support for sharing data and lessons learned, and standardizing reporting.

Some restaurateurs and small businesses were also eager to collaborate with the City to develop and administer a zero waste recognition program to acknowledge and promote local businesses that take action to reduce their use of single-use items and transition towards zero waste.

During targeted business engagement in Phase 3, many small ethno-cultural restaurants indicated the need for improved language-appropriate information and outreach. In particular, small business owners requested more information about the reduction plans,

recyclable and compostable packaging, and how to source affordable alternatives to foam cups and containers.

Many small businesses expressed an interest in working with the City, alongside community organizations, to help them transition from foam such as group purchasing and re-usable container programs.

Since “visible minorities” represent more than half of Vancouver’s population (51.6%, according to the 2016 Census) and yet, have little interaction with the City, it was stressed that the City should continue to explore, customize and pilot methods for increasing language access and participation of small ethno-cultural businesses as a way to minimize unintended consequences and help build trust.

- **Infrastructure and programs to increase the use of reusable items.** Vancouver has the opportunity to be a world-leading innovation hub for business models based on reusable alternatives to single-use items that offer convenience without waste. Both stakeholders and the public expressed interest throughout the consultation period in options that make it easier for people to reduce their use of single-use items. One idea that received a lot of interest was a city-wide travel mug and take-out container exchange program, like the to-go cup program in Freiberg, Germany and the Go-Box program in Portland, Oregon. These programs allow customers to purchase a reusable single-use item with a deposit, and return it to convenient locations throughout the city. Over 77% of Talk Vancouver respondents supported a take-out container exchange program and 74% supported a travel mug exchange program. The strategy also includes an action to launch the Bring Your Own Container Pilot for take-out food from select restaurants, which City staff are currently developing with Vancouver Coastal Health.

Stakeholders and the public reiterated the need for sanitary travel mugs and containers, sufficient dishwashing facilities (either in-store or in a centralized facility off-site), and the capacity of restaurants to participate in the program. In response, the strategy proposes an action to explore the need and feasibility for requiring commercial dishwashers to support the use of reusable dishware on site. Complementary infrastructure and programs are essential to establishing new behaviours and practices. These actions aim to meet people where they’re at in terms of habits and expectations around convenience and value.

- **Expand streetscape recycling.** The strategy includes an action to expand infrastructure for recycling in the public realm. The City and Recycle BC have been jointly running a streetscape recycling pilot project in Vancouver and the results to date have shown large amounts of contamination with food and other materials in paper and container bins making it difficult to recycle even these commonly accepted materials. Staff continue to work with Recycle BC to find ways to improve material quality and expand the program as problems are resolved.
- **Select performance metrics and targets.** To assess progress, respond to developments over time, and communicate progress, the strategy includes actions to develop performance metrics and targets. Alongside these actions, it is necessary for staff to work on overcoming data limitations related to distribution, disposal and recovery of single-use items. Overcoming these data gaps requires collaborating with others, such as industry, Recycle BC, Metro Vancouver and the provincial government. Performance metrics will be selected to represent the best available data.

- **City leading by example.** While Vancouver pursues community action with respect to reducing single-use disposable items, it is important that the City lead by example within its own operations. In this regard, a Priority Action recommended in Zero Waste 2040 (RTS 12177) is for staff to develop a Green Operations Zero Waste Plan for City operations. To align with the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy, a key area of scope for the Green Operations Zero Waste Plan will be the identification and implementation of actions to eliminate the use of single-use items in meetings, through the City's procurement processes, and for all operations, programs and projects.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk

Financial

Funding requirements will be developed as part of implementation planning for specific actions as required and addressed as part of the annual capital and operating budget process.

Environmental

The actions in the Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy will reduce the use of single-use items and their prevalence in street and marine litter, improve the recycling and composting of single-use items, and reduce their disposal in landfill and incinerator.

Legal

The *Vancouver Charter* grants the Council of the City of Vancouver broad legislative authority to regulate in relation to businesses, solid waste, nuisances and health matters.

By-law amendments will be required to:

- prohibit business license holders from distributing single-use plastic straws, as well as prepared foods in polystyrene foam cups and containers
- require business license holders to have reduction plans for disposable cups and plastic and paper shopping bags

Staff will bring forward these by-law amendments for enactment.

CONCLUSION

The Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy takes a comprehensive, integrated approach that balances many competing interests, shows leadership, and builds a movement towards long-lasting sustainable change.

The strategy includes early by-law enactments to prohibit the distribution of single-use plastic straws and polystyrene foam cups and containers, and require reduction plans for disposable cups and plastic and paper shopping bags. Future by-law amendments include requiring food vendors to offer single-use utensils only upon request, and, once composting and recycling markets are strengthened, requiring single-use items to be recyclable or compostable, and collected in commercial establishments and office buildings for recycling or composting.

Also included are a number of supportive actions to aid in the transition away from single-use items and provide support around alternatives, while working with the community on by-law structure to avoid negative unintended consequences.

As other levels of government develop regional, provincial and national initiatives to drive further reduction in single-use items, staff will continue to engage with them as policies develop. The National Zero Waste Council is focussing on developing circular economy opportunities, to change and promote new business models that offer convenience without single-use waste and there is a growing movement across all sectors of society to change how we manage our waste. The City's Single Use Item Reduction Strategy is one more step on the long road to zero waste.

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