

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025**

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**SUBJECT**     **Mattress Recycling – Provincial Policy Update**

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

To provide an update on the recent exclusion of mattresses from a forthcoming amendment to the *BC Recycling Regulation*, including impacts for the Capital Regional District's (CRD) solid waste service.

**BACKGROUND**

In BC, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is an environmental policy that holds producers accountable for the full lifecycle of their products, including the costs and logistics for end-of-life collection and recycling. In 2021, the BC Ministry of Environment & Parks released an action paper titled "Advancing Recycling in BC: Extended Producer Responsibility Five-Year Action Plan". This report called for the launch of several new EPR programs, including one for mattresses and foundations that was set to launch in 2025.

Local and regional governments across BC have long advocated for and supported the Ministry's plan to implement EPR for mattresses, including resolutions from the Union of BC Municipalities in both 2014 and 2020 that called for the inclusion of mattresses in any future update to EPR programs. Despite significant support from these stakeholders, the Ministry recently reversed its position in July 2025, informing regional districts, through the BC Product Stewardship Council, that mattresses had been removed from a forthcoming update to the *BC Recycling Regulation*.

The rationale for this policy reversal is a concern that EPR fees would appear to increase costs for consumers during a period of inflationary pressure. The Province's economic analysis determined that, to reflect the true cost of end-of-life management for mattresses, potential EPR fees could be as high as \$40-45 per unit. These would be charged at the time of purchase rather than disposal as they are now, potentially appearing as a cost increase to consumers due to this shift in timing. However, the Province also acknowledged that local and regional governments are currently subsidizing the disposal costs for these products to avoid illegal dumping—recognizing that the actual cost of recycling is already being covered by local governments and as a result, taxpayers, instead of the producers and consumers of these products.

**DISCUSSION**

Hartland Landfill currently accepts mattresses and their foundations as general refuse, charging \$155/tonne in 2025 plus a \$10 bin fee. Hartland also offers a voluntary mattress recycling program as part of its public drop-off area for the same cost as disposal. Through this voluntary program, the CRD shipped 280 tonnes of mattresses with metal springs for local processing in 2024 at a net cost of approximately \$162,000. These figures do not include processing and landfilling costs for the high volume of mattresses and foundations accepted at Hartland Landfill that were not suitable for recycling.

Staff at several regional districts across BC are seeking direction from their Boards to send letters to the Minister of Environment & Parks to express their objections to the exclusion of mattresses from the Province's forthcoming EPR program expansion. This advocacy aligns with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan Strategy #10, Action A to "Advocate to the Province to expand EPR programs".

#### Current Challenges in Mattress Disposal and Recycling

- Mattresses and their foundations are very expensive and difficult to landfill as they do not easily compress or compact, so they take up significant airspace.
- If not dismantled and shredded, the metal springs and wires in mattresses can cause significant damage to the wheels and tracks of heavy equipment, which in turn increases maintenance costs and decreases operational capacity due to machinery downtimes.
- Coordinating recycling options for mattresses and foundations is also challenging for individual landfills as they are bulky, heavy and difficult to store and transport.
- The recycling value of mattress components (e.g., metal, felt, foam, wood) is determined by the quality of the units, yet keeping these materials dry and clean to preserve their value requires significant covered storage that is cost prohibitive to maintain.
- Mattresses and their foundations can also be contaminated with biohazards, posing a risk for staff who are moving these materials on site.
- While some local deconstruction is possible for certain types of mattresses, foam mattresses have become a larger share of this product category and do not contain high-value materials, nor can they be deconstructed effectively.

Mattresses are frequently dumped illegally in public spaces, with clean-up and enforcement costs covered primarily by municipalities. Although the CRD has local mattress hauling and processing contracts in place, most mattresses brought to Hartland Landfill are currently processed for recycling or shredded on site to reduce costs, airspace consumption and the risk of equipment damage.

#### Benefits of an EPR Program for Mattresses

- An EPR program for mattresses will transfer the financial and logistical burdens of end-of-life collection and management from local and regional governments to the producers and consumers of these products through a user-pay model charged at the time the mattress is purchased.
- The economies of scale and logistics coordination benefits of a province-wide EPR program will reduce market vulnerability for mattress recycling businesses.
- Mattresses and their foundations could be disposed of for free at Hartland Landfill and other recycling depots, reducing the incentive for illegal dumping throughout the region.

If an EPR program for mattresses is implemented by the Province, the CRD would expect to receive a fee for collecting, storing and handling these materials from a stewardship organization much like other EPR programs in BC. Only mattresses deemed unsuitable for recycling would be shredded and landfilled, saving significant airspace and therefore extending the lifespan of Hartland Landfill.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### *Alternative 1*

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Board Chair is authorized to send an advocacy letter to the Ministry of Environment & Parks expressing the Capital Regional District's objection to the recent exclusion of mattresses from its forthcoming update to the Province's *Recycling Regulation*.

### *Alternative 2*

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

Advocating for the inclusion of mattresses in a future update to the Province's *Recycling Regulation* aligns with Strategy #10 in the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan to "Support Existing and New Extended Producer Responsibility Programs".

### *Environmental Implications*

Hartland Landfill currently receives a significant volume of mattresses and their foundations for disposal each year, both directly from residents and from municipalities that are retrieving illegally dumped materials. Although these products are currently being processed for recycling or shredded on site, continued disposal of these materials reduces the lifespan of Hartland Landfill.

### *Financial Implications*

The CRD is currently subsidizing the cost of recycling for mattresses by approximately \$162,000 annually. This figure does not include processing and landfilling costs for the high volume of mattresses that are not suitable for recycling. A province-wide EPR program will remove this cost from Environmental Resource Management's operational budget and allow for the development of the local mattress recycling industry with no budget impact. Free disposal of mattresses and their foundations at Hartland Landfill under an EPR program would also reduce the incentive to dump these products illegally across the region, reducing cleanup and enforcement costs currently covered by municipalities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is currently subsidizing the cost of end-of-life collection, management and recycling for mattresses. An Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for these products, as previously endorsed by the Province, will shift the financial and logistical burden of mattress disposal from the CRD to producers much like dozens of other products already under EPR stewardship. A new EPR program will also reduce illegal dumping, extend the life of Hartland Landfill and support the development of a circular economy by leveraging the economies of scale for mattress recycling. Staff recommend that the CRD Board respond to the Province's recent policy decision with an advocacy letter that reinforces CRD support for an EPR program that will reflect the true cost of managing mattresses.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:  
That the Board Chair is authorized to send an advocacy letter to the Ministry of Environment & Parks expressing the Capital Regional District's objection to the recent exclusion of mattresses from its forthcoming update to the Province's *Recycling Regulation*.

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