

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020**

SUBJECT Recycling Markets Update

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide the committee with an update on matters affecting recycling markets and their impact on local recycling programs and Hartland Landfill.

BACKGROUND

In 2018 and 2019, the Environmental Services Committee/Parks & Environment Committee received information reports outlining the status of recycling markets and matters affecting them, such as the decision made by China to severely restrict the importation of recyclable materials. In BC, one significant factor affecting the recycling of a variety of waste and recyclable materials is the BC Recycling Regulation (BCRR). The BCRR mandates extended producer responsibility (EPR), requiring that producers of products that are subject to the regulation assume responsibility for managing them once they have been used and become waste. This has included residential packaging and printed products since 2014 and is the reason why the Capital Regional District (CRD) now serves as a collection contractor to Recycle BC, the EPR agency responsible for these materials, rather than providing the service itself as it had done for the previous 25 years.

On June 29, 2020, an Order-In-Council was passed amending the BCRR in a number of significant ways, with some of these changes taking effect immediately, while others will be phased in by 2023. This Order-In-Council arose in part as a result of the feedback received by the province on its Clean BC Plastics Action Plan consultation paper, and a copy of the Order-In-Council is provided for information in Appendix A. Highlights of the changes include:

- Increasing the minimum deposit on refundable beverage containers from five cents to ten cents, effective June 29, 2020
- Requiring that all milk and milk substitute beverage containers become subject to a deposit/refund system effective February 1, 2022; and
- Expanding the range of packaging and paper products that are subject to the BCRR to include packaging-like products and single-use products, effective January 1, 2023.

Both packaging-like and single-use products will be subject to the regulation if they would typically be disposed of after a single use or short-term use. The intent of the expansion is to include products that can more easily be integrated with the existing residential recycling system and would include items that consumers typically expect to be able to recycle through their residential curbside and/or depot collection programs.

The addition of packaging-like products is intended to capture items that are used by consumers for their own packaging needs, such as a reusable food storage container. From the consumer's perspective, such items are often indistinguishable from packaging and so there is often an expectation to be able to recycle them through residential recycling programs like the blue box or local recycling depot.

Packaging-like products that will become subject to EPR in 2023 will include items such as:

- Food bags and films: including sandwich and freezer bags, paper lunch bags, aluminum foil wrap, plastic film wrap, wax paper and parchment paper
- Disposable food storage containers: typically those intended for short-term use, such as plastic lunch containers aluminum pie plates and baking trays; and
- Household items purchased as a product, such as moving boxes, plastic film used as drop sheets for painting, bubble wrap and plastic plant pots and saucers.

The addition of single-use items is intended to capture items that may not be considered packaging but similarly serve a single or short-term purpose. Single-use products that will become subject to EPR in 2023 include items that serve a single or short-term use, such as straws, stir sticks, disposable utensils, plates, bowls and cups that can be managed through existing residential recycling systems. Party supplies will also become subject to the regulation, including items such as paper streamers and pinwheels but will not include costumes, balloons, ribbons and other items, as they would contaminate existing recycling streams.

These changes to the BCRR can be expected to provide residents with new recycling alternatives for a range of items and help reduce the amount of waste being received at Hartland Landfill. It can be expected that Recycle BC will expand its services to collect these additional products through curbside and/or depot recycling programs, including those provided by the CRD under contract to Recycle BC. They will help to address the issues associated with a variety of single-use items, including polystyrene cups and containers, diminishing the need for a model bylaw to ban their use, as was presented at the July 24, 2019 Environmental Services Committee meeting in a Notice of Motion.

CONCLUSION

Recycling programs and markets are significantly influenced by the BC Recycling Regulation (BCRR), which mandates producer responsibility for recycling a variety of materials. On June 29, 2020, an Order-In-Council was passed amending the BCRR to include an expansion of the range of packaging and paper products that are subject to the BCRR to include packaging-like products and single-use products, effective January 1, 2023. Once in effect, it can be expected that recycling services in the region, including those provided by the CRD, will be expanded to collect these additional materials.

RECOMMENDATION

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the Recycling Markets Update report be received for information.

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| Submitted by: | Russ Smith, Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management |
| Concurrence: | Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services |
| Concurrence: | Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer |

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Province of British Columbia Order in Council – June 29, 2020