

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE **DATE:** 2020 January 20

FROM: DIRECTOR ENGINEERING AND DIRECTOR - PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES **FILE:** 36500-00

SUBJECT: **ELIMINATION OF SINGLE USE PLASTIC BAGS, STRAWS, UTENSILS AND CONTAINERS AT CITY FACILITIES**

PURPOSE: To respond to the Committee's request to provide feedback on the feasibility and advisability for elimination of single use plastic bags, straws, utensils and containers at City Facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee recommend Council to:
 - a. Continue with current practices to eliminate single use plastic bags, straws and utensils at City civic facilities; and
 - b. Direct staff to continue to evaluate and phase out single-use plastic containers at City facilities as suitable alternative products become available.

REPORT**INTRODUCTION**

On 2019 March 28, the Environment and Social Planning Committee brought forward a motion regarding single use plastic bags and straws and on 2019 June 04 on single use plastic utensils and containers. The Committee requested that staff report back on the feasibility and advisability of eliminating the use of single use plastic bags, straws, utensils and containers at City facilities and of a City-wide ban on these single use plastic items. This report addresses City facilities only. A report on the City-wide ban will follow subsequently.

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Arising from discussion, the Committee further requested that dog "biodegradable" plastic bags be included in the staff review. This report responds to these requests and summarizes current work underway on single use items.

POLICY SECTION

The response to Committee is aligned with the City of Burnaby Corporate Strategic Plan supporting the following goals and sub-goals of the plan:

Goal

- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community –
Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community.
- A Healthy Community
 - Healthy life –
Encourages opportunities for healthy living and well-being
 - Healthy environment –
Enhance our environmental health, resilience and sustainability
- A Dynamic Community
 - Community development –
Manage change by balancing economic development with environmental protection and maintaining a sense of belonging
- A Thriving Organization
 - Organizational culture –
Ensure that our core values are reflected in our policies, programs and service delivery

BACKGROUND

The City implemented a civic facility waste reduction program for both front of house and back of house in 2013 that included the separation of garbage, mixed containers, mixed paper, food scraps and food-soiled paper products. Development of the program included facility assessments for space and access for separated material collection receptacles, waste audits to determine the composition of the waste stream and to identify materials being distributed through city food services that could be included in the separated programs, and to look at alternative options for food packaging.

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SINGLE USE PLASTIC BAGS, STRAWS, UTENSILS AND CONTAINERS

a. Elimination of Single Use Plastic Items at Civic Facilities

During the civic facility waste reduction program development, plastic bags and straws were not identified as large components of the waste stream and distribution of plastic bags were not found to commonly occur at civic facilities. As part of the corporate implementation of separated food scraps collection, Burnaby Food Services shifted towards packaging that could be recycled or composted within the new corporate program. Food services introduced compostable products such as wooden cutlery and hot food take out containers, eliminated single serve condiments where appropriate, and phased out the use of plastic straws.

b. Single Use Plastic Bags

The majority of civic facilities have phased out the use of plastic bags. Where bags are required for retail purchases, paper bags are being used. The remaining departments that are still using plastic bags have either already committed to switching to paper bags once the plastic bag stock is depleted or have identified them as reusable.

c. Single Use Plastic Straws

Food Services have removed all single use plastic straws from restaurants and cafes. Paper-based straws are available upon request.

d. Single Use Plastic Utensils

Food Services have phased out single use plastic utensils in favour of wooden or compostable products.

e. Single Use Plastic Containers

Food Services have been working towards finding alternatives to single use plastic containers. Fountain beverages and cups are currently being phased out of civic facilities in favour of sealed container beverages, such as cans. The use of plastic beer cups at outdoor events is also being reviewed and a switch to using cans instead of kegs and cups is under consideration.

There are challenges around finding suitable alternatives for pre-packaged and prepared meals. Packaging is required to be visibly clear so that the customer can see the item and be microwave friendly. Where appropriate, paper or compostable plastic are being used, however, suitable alternatives are not always available in the marketplace. As new products are introduced, they are evaluated for viability of application by Food Services.

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BIODEGRADABLE DOG WASTE BAGS

The environmental benefits of using biodegradable or compostable bags for dog waste is debatable. Biodegradable plastics do not decompose through standard composting operations and are therefore not accepted at the region's Green Waste Processing Facilities.

Biodegradable plastics are similar to other plastics but have been treated with an additional chemical agent which accelerates the breakdown process. Research suggests this may actually lead to an increase in the amount of small plastic particles in the environment. In addition, patrons may demonstrate an increased tendency to dispose of biodegradable plastic dog waste bags in parkland if they believe the bags and contents will decompose naturally.

The Parks Department has installed "red box" dog waste receptacles at select dog off-leash areas. Waste from these receptacles is collected and brought to a central facility where the bags and contents are separated. The contents are then disposed of at a waste treatment plant and the bags are incinerated.

CONCLUSION

The City's civic facilities have largely eliminated single use plastic bags, straws and utensils. Staff recommend that current initiatives being undertaken by Food Services continue to phase out single use plastic containers and introduce paper or compostable alternatives as these products become available.



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