

ANNEX B: STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATIONS

Multi-Materials British Columbia (MMBC) - Extended Producer Responsibility

MMBC, working with the province, municipalities and regional governments, has ensured the availability of depot collection for film plastics, including plastic bags. MMBC, on behalf of the BC Ministry of the Environment, contracts the collection and management of post-consumer waste film plastics, to processing and recycling facilities in the lower mainland. In the City, MMBC has worked with local retailers and collection facilities to provide a drop-off network for consumers to recycle bags.

MMBC's 2014 report suggests their contracted target has been reached, but remain unclear as reporting volumes for total plastic production entering the economy remain unknown³⁴. MMBC also makes reference to their commitment to improve the amount of recycling content in plastic bags, ranging from 15-100%. MMBC also references the importance of education and awareness in reducing the amount of plastic bags used by consumers, through encouraging the use of reusable bags, more efficient packing by store employees, and querying customers on the requirement for bags at the checkout line. MMBC also states their commitments in reducing the impacts of plastic bag use, through optimization of material properties of the bags themselves, but does not reference any successes in this domain. The status of their efforts to reduce plastic recycling content, and education and awareness campaigns remain unknown at this time.

Industry Representatives

Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA) supports provincial recycling and extended producer responsibility programs and suggest plastic bags are the more environmentally friendly bag alternative. CPIA suggests current bag recycling rates are near 35% (actual reference not provided), and remain important options for reuse bin liners or pet waste. CPIA further states that recycled plastic bags are an important resource for local reprocessing industry, recycled plastic product manufacturing, and job creation. CPIA highlights recent increases in the public's access to collection depots to improve film plastics via the MMBC programs.

The Retail Council of Canada has prepared several statements (online) that support continued use of plastic bags, and argue against any proposed ban on plastic bags, with the following key points³⁵:

- *RCC is opposed to the current proposals regarding the outright ban of plastic bags... since voluntary initiatives being taken by industry are successful in reducing distribution of plastic bags.*
- *Assuming consumers will entirely replace plastic bags with reusable bags is not realistic. Consumers want these bags for their garbage rather than buy new ones.*
- *Plastic bags are recyclable and the retail industry compensates municipalities for the collection, transportation and sorting (blue box) of this material. In addition, this material is valuable to recyclers and is resold to help offset costs associated with running recycling programs.*

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers suggests that ongoing education and awareness campaigns, coupled with the inclusion of curbside regional recycling schemes, are adequate for addressing the litter problem, and suggest a collaborative approach to any legislation (letter to Mayor and Council, 2 Feb 2016). Note that the CRD does not currently have curbside plastic film recycling.

³⁴ The 2014 MMBC annual report suggests that 80.1% of all plastic materials under the program were collected, out of the 145,351 tonnes of plastics produced by suppliers who have registered with the program. No estimates have been found which attempt to quantify what portion of the total plastics this represents.

³⁵ ³⁵ <http://www.retailcouncil.org/advocacy/plastic-bags>.

CRD Regional Waste Management

The CRD has introduced the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program, as mandated by the BC Recycling Regulation. In 2014, Multi-Materials BC (MMBC) took responsibility for the life-cycle management of film plastics and printed paper in the City. The regulation stipulates an intended recovery rate of 75%. In 2008, costs to include the plastic bags in the blue-box program were deemed excessive, and the responsibility for the collection of these items was transferred to the user. CRD has determined that they do not have the authority to tax or ban the use of plastic grocery bags. The actual recovery rates of plastic bags and plastic film in BC or the City is not yet known. The CRD is planning on updated waste stream analysis in 2016 that will inform the City's statistical information needed to make quality policy decisions and potentially highlight the effectiveness and considerations related to the performance of the MMBC program. The CRD bans the landfilling of plastic grocery bags but is unable to practically enforce.

Environmental Advocacy Groups / Surfrider International

Surfrider Foundation Vancouver Island chapter is advocating for ocean health and the global reduction of ocean plastic. The following text is taken from their online petition webpage³⁶:

- *Plastic bags are polluting our oceans, killing tens of thousands of birds and marine animals each year. They are typically used once or twice for short time before they become waste, and often litter. The idea behind banning single use plastic bags is to promote the use of re-useable shopping bag.*

The New Plastics Economy – 2016 Report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Economic Impacts and Considerations

After an initial short use phase, 95% of plastic packaging material is lost to the economy; a value of 80-120 billion USD annually, plus the cost of greenhouse gas emissions from its production – estimated at 40 billion USD per year³⁷, plus marine ecosystem degradation impacts, estimated conservatively at 40 billion USD, annually³⁸. At current expansion rates, the complete plastics industry will account for 20% of total oil consumption and 15% of annual carbon emissions by 2050³⁹. These figures clearly show the importance of reducing plastic waste, use and recycling.

Circular Economy Model

The overarching vision of the circular economy is that plastics never become waste, but instead are treated as a valuable resource and essential nutrients for industry. The circular model aims to greatly optimise the economic and environmental outcomes by stimulating and promoting a plastics economy with drastically improved services and reduced negative externalities “nevertheless, reduction should be pursued where possible and beneficial, by dematerialising, moving away from single-use as the default, and substituting by other materials”⁴⁰.

Design Labelling and Engineering Considerations

Consistent labelling, use of safe and effective material properties, and innovative and widely adopted processing and collection schemes are required in order to effectively leverage widespread innovation and reduce plastic's overall negative impacts.

³⁶ <https://www.change.org/p/ask-victoria-city-council-to-ban-single-use-plastic-bags>

³⁷ The New Plastics Economy. Rethinking the Future of Plastics. Ellen MacArthur Foundation. WEF. McKinsey Centre for Business and the Environment, 2016.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.