

BC Zero Waste Discussion Paper

February 2017

BC Intermunicipal Working Group on Zero Waste

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy paper is to request that the provincial government take actions to help BC work towards zero waste.

Executive Summary

Here is a summary of the recommendations to the province of BC on Zero Waste:

1. Develop and implement a Provincial Zero Waste Strategy
2. Enact measures to focus on the higher measures of the zero waste hierarchy (reconsider, reduce, reuse)
3. Enhance existing EPR programs
4. Add new EPR programs
5. Reduce and compost organics
6. Work with specific sectors
7. Maximize use of existing disposal capacity and minimize environmental impacts
8. Advocate to the federal government for zero waste policy

Background

The development of this policy paper was in response to a perceived need for a comprehensive provincial strategy to move BC towards zero waste and complement the work being done by local governments on waste planning and zero waste.

This paper is a result of discussions with local government elected officials from across the province who volunteered to assist and a review of past documents related to waste reduction in BC:

- UBCM motions (2003-2016)
- UBCM Policy Paper 2 (2012)
- CCME commitments on EPR and progress to date
- RCBC –On the Road to Zero Waste: Priorities for Local Government
- RCBC 2015 Conference findings on the Circular Economy
- BC Auditor General Report on Product Stewardship in BC

In some cases, the UBCM motion is referenced in the recommendations below.

Intermunicipal Working Group on Zero Waste

This working group of elected officials from electoral areas, regional districts and municipal government have come together to advocate for stronger provincial action towards zero waste.

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a Provincial Zero Waste Strategy

The provincial government should develop a provincial level zero waste strategy that includes the following aspects:

- **Goal:** Adopt a zero waste goal with interim targets
- **Definition:** Adopt the Zero Waste International Alliance peer-reviewed definition “Zero Waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary, to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use. Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health definition of zero waste”
- **Hierarchy:** Adopt the Recycling Council of BC zero waste hierarchy instead of the pollution prevention hierarchy (see Appendix A)
- **Business Case:** Build on the Zero Waste Business case that the Ministry of Environment commissioned
- **Dialogue and Input:** Look to ways to address the top three R’s in conjunction with local governments through an on-going dialogue with local governments (as well as other stakeholders). Consider economic development opportunities – adopting a non-siloed approach and working with other sectors (government as well as business) to take advantage of opportunities. There should be a task force with representation from small local governments, large cities and electoral areas (both remote and more central) as well as First Nations.
- **Action Plan:** Map out actions that the province will conduct or facilitate that allows local governments to match within their own solid waste plans (for example, new EPR programs, phasing out of problem products, communications strategies, materials reductions, promotion of sharing/leasing/repairing/reuse, etc.). This will also allow other stakeholders including businesses to plan accordingly.
- **Communications:** Develop and collaborate on communications tools that can be shared by local governments and other stakeholders based on community based social marketing principles.
- **Education:** on zero waste and circular economy in classrooms, colleges, for businesses, etc.
- **Knowledge:** Conduct research, data collection and share knowledge
- **Resources:** ensure sufficient provincial government staff to implement the strategy such as for the actions above and below as well as to assist local governments in waste reduction (B27 2016)

- **Advocacy:** work to enhance zero waste systems with other partners (federal government, other provinces and territories, First Nations, non-profit groups, environmental groups, universities and learning facilities, business, industry, etc.)
- **Monitor and revise:** Renew the strategy every five years based on input from stakeholders, progress to date and knowledge gathered.

Rationale

It is important that the provincial government adopt a zero waste goal as this sets a clear direction and the interim targets push for action. This will also assist local governments in aligning their waste planning with the province's direction. In addition, there are actions that the province can take that cannot be done by local governments so a provincial plan can work in harmony with local government plans to cover the gaps that exist currently. It is also a more efficient use of tax money to have one central government perform some of the work than to have to invent the systems separately at each location, particularly with some regional districts being smaller and perhaps not having the staff capacity to develop these systems.

A clear zero waste definition and hierarchy must be part of the plan to guide the direction and prevent the misuse of the terms that is occurring in some other jurisdictions (such as certification of “zero waste to landfill” despite no meaningful waste reduction taking place or redefining recycling to include burning waste).

Working with local governments and other stakeholders can help to identify the barriers to further waste prevention and provide feedback on new initiatives.

2. Enact measures to focus on the higher measures of the zero waste hierarchy (reconsider, reduce, reuse)

There are numerous policies that the provincial government can enact to reduce waste. It should develop policy for key areas and develop matching tools for local government. The provincial government should adopt these policies internally and model their enactment for other levels of government. Key areas should include:

- Laws to incent reuse (including collection of materials at landfills), durability, reparability, disassembly, etc) (numerous motions on EPR have noted rapid product obsolescence, need for redesign, reparability, reduction in packaging –B31 2008, improved recyclability of packaging, incentives for waste minimization, etc)
- Develop progressive taxation approaches (tax bads not goods) or other forms of incentives. For example, PST exemption for 'repair' of items otherwise destined to be discarded (Swedish example) or decreasing subsidies for virgin materials while encouraging use of recycled content.
- Encouraging renovations or deconstruction of buildings over demolitions.

- Develop green procurement incentives, policy and systems as well as sample policy for local governments
- Mandate opt in programs for directory and other bulk mail delivery but with Canada Post unaddressed admail exemption for local governments (B54 2010, safety exemption B 59 2013)
- Legislate post consumer content requirements for plastic containers (2002 UBCM Environment Action Plan)
- Enact province-wide landfill bans once there are diversion alternatives for products
- Place a moratorium on new bottled water plants
- Push for increase in the use of reusable and refillable containers
- Looking at banning certain products such as plastic cups and cutlery (like France)
- Reduce plastic waste, including implementation of a ban on single-use bags and other plastic packaging (Plastic bag tax –B144 2006 or plastic bag ban B88 2008, B28 2016). Consider banning certain products such as plastic cups and cutlery (like France)
- Reducing packaging and mandating that only truly recyclable packaging is used

Rationale

For many of the above policies, only the provincial government may have the legislative ability to implement or it may make more sense for once central body to enact it rather than several different ones with slightly different outcomes. Other jurisdictions around the world are moving to implement these and the province can learn from their experience. It is also important to ensure that BC and Canada do not become dumping grounds for poorly designed products once other jurisdictions phase them out. In addition, the level of expertise needed to research some of the material aspects may be better suited to the provincial level of government. Determining the targets of policy should be done in conjunction with local government.

It is also important to consider that EPR alone will not deliver design change; it needs to be supported by additional policies such as those listed above.

3. Enhance existing EPR programs

BC is a leader in implementing EPR programs and moving ahead on its commitments to the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment Canada-wide Action Plan on EPR. However, now that the province has experience with these programs, it is important to foster continuous improvement, address problems that have arisen and push for programs to meet their full potential including for redesign of products and packaging.

- **Understanding the system:** The province should provide better communication about how programs work. By their nature, programs have

an incentive to keep costs low for their producers so it is up to other stakeholders (local government and citizens) to ask for high quality outcomes to ensure the programs deliver what was intended.

- **Recycling Regulation Amendments:**

- Add targets for awareness that increase over the years
- Implement outcomes around local and social benefits and impacts (particularly for new programs where existing infrastructure exists)
- Ensuring service in more rural areas or even mail back systems. Change outcomes to require service where products are sold. Require Regional District specific depot coverage plans. Have an RD by RD discussion to set minimum depot numbers and locations for each one based on population but also flow of commerce and waste. (B39 2011 –access for consumers in small and rural communities, B62 2014 MMBC expansion, UBCM Policy Paper 2012, B28 2012, A6 2014, B24 2014, B29 2016)
- Focus higher up the hierarchy: Look at ways to redesign, reduce the amount of products or packaging and/or change the materials used and make business accountable. This could be done through mandating differential fees based on environmental/waste impact rather than fees set by operation costs only. Put in targets for reduce/redesign or add clear outcomes or even prescriptive measures. Stewardship plans should be clear on how each program will promote this and achieve targets.
- The Ministry of Environment needs to have financial penalties for non-compliance (BC Attorney General). See the Quebec model for fines related to not meeting targets.
- Set recovery rates by product type or materials class (not combined)
- Better quality reporting on more comprehensive suite of outcomes
- Have higher targets for programs renewing plans so there is continuous improvement – (UBCM Policy paper on PPP recommends a target of 85% applied to each subcategory (not a composite target) and to apply to each local government (not a provincial average))
- Address the litter problem of beverage containers by increasing the deposit rates and ensuring that the incentive level at least keep pace with inflation or as adequate to drive desired behaviour
- Increase the requirement for refilling of beverage containers
- Add requirements for more local government and stakeholder input (Multiple UBCM documents -2012 Policy Paper, Environment Action Plans) (possibly through seats on Boards or Advisory Committees)
- Enhance accountability and transparency –public representation on boards, open access to information given to boards and decisions, also access to financial information for all programs, not just those that charge visible fees (Environment Action Plans_2000)

- Include options for return to retail, depot, curbside (Environment Action Plans_2002)
- Coordination of education with province, local government and industry (Environment Action Plans_2000) and for industry to fund it all
- **Recycling Regulation enforcement:**
 - Ensure coverage of all regulated products (for example electronic wristwatches are regulated but presently are not included in any program)
 - Ensure programs protect the environment and pay the costs of that (for example, the major appliance program is to be responsible for safe removal of refrigerants (B77 2013), the tire stewardship program is not covering costs at local landfills so many have take back fees). Eliminating charges at drop off sites should be a key goal and ensuring that local government landfills and transfer stations are compensated as citizens will still bring materials there even if they are not official drop off locations.
 - Ensure the MMBC program is complying with the Recycling Regulation for streetscape recycling (not just for communities with a certain population or density but where waste bins exist)
 - Ensure recycling of glass, soft plastic and expanded polystyrene is as easy as for the other materials (i.e. mandate curbside collection if that is available for the other products in a community) (as per Recycling Regulation)
 - Include other soft plastics and foil in MMBC program
 - Ensure that all beverage containers are refillable or recyclable
 - Create a local government enhanced dispute resolution system – compensation if not meeting service levels or targets
 - Create an independent body to monitor EPR programs (free of industry representatives)
- **Compensation:** Look at how to set fair compensation policies for local government and all service providers, (B33 2010, UBCM Policy Paper 2012) perhaps using the BC Utilities Commission model or something else. There should be an analysis done by an independent third party to ensure that local governments are not subsidizing EPR programs and ensure costs are adequate and accurate for the recovery of materials.

Rationale

Extended Producer Responsibility programs are meant to have the producers pay for managing the products at end of life but also to drive better design of products and packaging. The Recycling Regulation and work of the Ministry of Environment has focused on collection for recycling or responsible handling (in the case of

hazardous materials) but few programs are achieving success in redesign, reduction or reuse. In addition, there are many regions where the product may be sold but there are few collection facilities. There are some gaps where some regulated products have no programs or where programs are not fulfilling their mandate.

As to date competing programs have tended to compete for producers (not to provide better services but to provide fewer services at lower cost), it is unlikely that programs competing in this way will serve the public interest. However, with a monopsony where all collectors must sell to one customer and where citizen feedback calls for central collection facilities (one-stop drop), it makes sense for local governments in some situations to continue to partner with programs as collectors. However, there needs to be an impartial way to ensure fair compensation for these services to ensure that taxes are not used to continue to subsidize program product collection. This fair compensation system should also apply to non-local government collection services to ensure the viability of these service providers.

As the Recycling Regulation is outcomes-based, it makes sense to add additional outcomes that address identified problems and push programs to improve. As developing new programs can be challenging due to lack of data, it makes sense for the province to develop a two-tier system of requirements for programs: those for a new programs, and a higher set of standards for on-going programs upon their plan renewal. Financial penalties for non-compliance with outcomes or failure to meet targets should be implemented similar to other jurisdictions.

Education on how the EPR programs work will allow for better discourse and show stakeholders (including local governments) where their input and advocacy can drive program improvements. Recent discussions show many misconceptions about the Recycling Regulation and EPR in general, which has not been helpful in coming up with coherent recommendations for program improvement.

Access to collection systems is an on-going problem and the Stewardship Association of BC standards do not meet the needs of many communities, particularly smaller or rural communities. Having a Regional District by Regional District level discussion on where the main collection locations will be can ensure adequate service that matches the needs of the communities based on where commerce and materials flow. This can address specifics such as where two communities have adjoining borders so one depot may service both or sparsely populated regions where a small town may be the central hub and so would need a depot, despite a small population.

4. Add new EPR programs

The ultimate goals should be to turn over responsibility of handling products and materials to the producers. To achieve that, the number of products regulated under the Recycling Regulation needs to increase.

- Fulfill the commitment to the CCME Canada-wide Action plan on EPR Phase 1 (commitment was by 2015) by adding the remaining products and materials in the categories of:
 - Packaging
 - Printed materials
 - Mercury containing lamps,
 - Other mercury containing products,
 - Electronic and electrical products
 - Household hazardous and special wastes
 - Automotive products.
 - This would include expanding to Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial (ICI) packaging and printed paper (UBCM Policy Paper 2012) as well as other gaps such as mercury containing thermometers. A thorough review should be done to ascertain the gaps.
- Fulfill the commitment to the CCME Canada-wide Action plan on EPR Phase 2 (commitment was by 2017) by regulating the following products and materials in the categories of:
 - Construction and demolition materials (B90 2010, gypsum B81 2012)
 - Furniture (Mattresses B97 2014)
 - Textiles and carpet
 - Appliances, including ozone-depleting substances
- Develop the next set of products to be regulated so that local government and business can plan accordingly and work with CCME to make these national commitments. Candidates may be:
 - Pool and photographic chemicals (2007 UBCM Environment Action Plan)
 - Agricultural plastics and twine (B84 -2008, B30 2012)
 - Derelict vessels (B23 & B78 2012, B30 2013, B23 2014, B22 2016)
 - Cigarette Butt deposit return program (B129 2016 –referred to executive)
 - Sporting goods and safety equipment such as car seatsThe next list should be developed in consultation with local governments and using waste composition studies.

Rationale

The province is to be congratulated for its commitment to the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment's Canada-wide Action Plan on EPR and the programs it has regulated to date. However there is concern that the province is slipping in its

timeline to deliver these. The province needs to provide an amended timeline that it will provide adequate staff to fulfill. This commitment allows local governments to develop their own plans in concert with this as well as for business development to take place in anticipation of the regulatory changes. In addition, the more quickly these large contributors to the waste stream can be part of EPR programs, the longer the lifespan of waste disposal facilities which results in costs savings across the province.

5. Reduce and compost organics

In addition to EPR programs, systems to reduce and compost the organic components (kitchen scraps, yard and garden waste) are important.

- Develop and share food waste reduction tools (including behaviour change tools using community based social marketing)
- Develop policy as needed or communicate existing policy (such as that allowing food donations) to remove barriers to reduction
- Provide grants for local community groups who wish to develop systems around food sharing or composting.
- Develop and share research on organics nutrient circulation and develop policy for ensuring the cleanest organics and how to return them to the soil (incentives for landscaping, promotion of systems to remove chemicals from sewer system, forecast of volumes, driving markets for compost, etc)
- Facilitate yard waste composting (B112 2016)

Rationale

Handling products should be the role of producers but planning for composting organics will likely remain the role of local government (as food will remain a constant and is often unbranded). This relatively new area is expanding and many local governments could benefit from assistance (particularly smaller ones) in developing systems as well as making the switch from a focus on waste disposal to a focus on organics and ensuring producers fulfil their responsibilities.

It is important to ensure systems are scaled appropriately for the location and not necessarily to the present level of organic waste but that that remains once food waste is reduced. Using the food and organics related components of the RCBC Zero Waste Hierarchy can assist with this and should be followed.

To truly close the loop, the nutrients must be returned to the soil so systems will need to be adjusted to prioritize the use of these local nutrients over fossil-fuel intensive ones.

6. Work with specific sectors

Some actions may be related to activities or sectors rather than by material type.

- In concert with local government, identify target industries to work with to

develop new standards for waste reduction and diversion (such as agriculture)

- Develop policies, programs or systems to facilitate waste reduction and diversion at work camps. Require that industry and work camps work with local governments on waste planning, particularly if the waste remains in the region or uses regional facilities.
- Look at cross sectoral systems that impact waste (e.g. forestry wood waste classification and policy)
- Develop policy and model systems for events based waste
- Develop policy and model systems for local governments working with First Nations communities on sharing waste systems

Rationale

The province is better situated to develop these more comprehensive policies and systems but local government collaboration is needed to identify target areas, develop programs and pilot policy or tools.

7. Maximize use of existing disposal capacity and minimize environmental impacts

While the focus of a zero waste strategy is to avoid needing disposal, there are some actions that should be taken:

- Conduct research to determine the remaining province-wide disposal capacity and conduct the actions in the recommendations above to maximize the lifespan of existing landfills.
- Work with regional districts to allow sharing of landfills should it be determined to be more cost efficient, better for social impacts and/or more sound environmentally (such as with drier climates)
- Work with smaller local governments to ensure they can meet environmental standards in a way that may allow for more of their funds to be used on diversion and not all on disposal.
- Improve systems to report and clean up illegal dump sites (B89 2011, B29 2012)
- The province should ensure that no new waste incineration facilities are approved

Rationale

It is important to ensure high standards for disposal are met. Smaller local governments may struggle to fund these commitments at the expense of waste reduction activities. Some areas are better suited for landfills than others due to their climate, for example, where higher rainfall results in more leachate to manage.

Burning of waste is very expensive, resulting in a high opportunity cost relative to reducing waste. It is polluting and wastes the energy embodied in products and materials where far more energy is saved through higher steps on the hierarchy. It

reduces the volume of waste but still requires landfilling and in some cases, creates more toxic waste. It also can provide a disincentive to reduce or recycle as certain volumes are required.

8. Advocate to the federal government for zero waste policy

Advocating for the federal government to use the tools at their disposal can complement a provincial zero waste strategy. The province should ask for the federal government to:

- Develop a federal zero waste strategy
- Conduct research and share knowledge of best practices from around the world
- Incorporate best practices into trade agreement requirements
- Integrate zero waste and circular economy systems into policy and incentives
- Change incentives to use less virgin materials and more recycled materials
- Create incentives for better design and phasing out of problematic materials
- Provide tax breaks for repair
- Implement mandatory increased warranty times
- Mandate labels that show the number of years that a product will be supported (such as having parts available) similar to what France is doing
- Ensure repair manuals are available online and parts available
- Looking at banning certain products such as plastic cups and cutlery (like France)
- Enact laws that work towards reuse/sharing and waste reduction (such as the Good Samaritan law for food donations). Review health laws that do not meet intent of safety but deter zero waste. Revisit liability laws with regard to reuse of products.
- Require better labelling of products, including mandating the word “compostable” for certified products only and stopping the use of the word “biodegradable” as it relates to products
- Work with international partners to move towards zero waste

Rationale

While many policies can be developed at the provincial level, there are some that are best done by or in concert with the federal government.

Appendix A –Zero Waste Hierarchy

The Recycling Council of BC Zero Waste Hierarchy was approved by the RCBC Board in 2014. The purpose is to align the direction previously given by the Pollution Prevention hierarchy with a zero waste goal as well as to aid in zero waste planning by giving more direction and defining each level of the hierarchy. It can be seen at [www.rcbc.bc.ca/files/u7/RCBC Zero Waste Hierarchy - APR 14.pdf](http://www.rcbc.bc.ca/files/u7/RCBC%20Zero%20Waste%20Hierarchy%20-%20APR%2014.pdf). A similar hierarchy was endorsed by Zero Waste Canada and the Zero Waste International Alliance and can be seen at <http://zerowastecanada.ca/zero-waste-hierarchy/>.

Appendix B -Contact

Should you wish to contact the BC Inter-Municipal Working Group on Zero Waste, please go to our website www.bczerowaste.wordpress.com. Feedback on this document is welcome.