
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Province seeks feedback to ban, reduce, recycle more plastics

VICTORIA – British Columbians are invited to have their say on proposed new actions to reduce the plastic waste polluting the province’s waterways, environment and landfills.

“The message from British Columbians is loud and clear – we need to take action to reduce plastic waste, especially single-use items like water bottles and plastic bags that often find their way into our waters, streets and environment,” said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. “We have all seen the striking images of animals and fish being caught up in everyday plastic waste like grocery bags or beer can loops that ensnare these beautiful creatures and it cannot continue. I look forward to hearing from people about how we can all play a part in reducing plastic pollution and plastics use overall.”

British Columbians are encouraged to share their opinions in an online survey and read the Province’s consultation paper: cleanbc.ca/plastics

Government is proposing action in four connected areas to reduce plastic pollution and use less plastic overall:

- **Bans on single-use packaging:** determining which types of plastic packaging to phase out altogether, as well as any necessary exemptions, such as those for health, safety and accessibility, to keep products available for the people who need them
- **Dramatically reduce single-use plastics in landfills and waterways:** requiring producers to take responsibility for more plastic products, ensuring more single-use items like sandwich bags, straws and cutlery get recycled
- **Plastic bottle and beverage container returns:** expanding the deposit-refund system to cover all beverage containers – including milk and milk-substitutes – with a 10-cent refundable deposit, keeping millions more containers out of landfills and waterways
- **Reducing plastic waste overall:** supporting effective ways to prevent plastic waste in the first place and making sure recycled plastic is reused effectively

“B.C.’s system is the envy of North America,” said Brock Macdonald, CEO, Recycling Council of BC. “By bringing industry to the table, extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs make it possible for materials to be recycled much more efficiently. That’s good for business and good for the environment. Today’s addition is a targeted and strategic increase to B.C.’s already expansive series of EPR programs.”

The Province is also reviewing new ways to make plastic recycling easier, including a proposed system of electronic refunds for empty bottle returns. This would eliminate the need to sort bottles and provide the option to have refunds processed electronically or donated to community organizations.

“Surfrider Foundation Canada strongly supports the Government of British Columbia’s consultations regarding meaningful action to eliminate and reduce plastic waste and pollution,” said Lilly Woodbury, chapter manager, Surfrider Pacific Rim. “This timely discussion will set out the next major steps in British Columbia’s ongoing efforts to build a prosperous and pollution-free province. We highly encourage all British Columbians to step up and be heard at this crucial time.”

While B.C. is a North American leader with 22 industry led recycling programs, the Province is working with counterparts Canada-wide to develop national standards specifying the minimum amount of recycled plastic in new packaging and products.

These proposed changes support the Province’s CleanBC efforts to reduce pollution and divert waste from landfills.

“We have a responsibility to British Columbians to curb the significant impacts of plastic pollution on our environment and marine life,” said Andrew Weaver, leader of the BC Green Party caucus. “Taking action on plastic waste is a priority the BC Green caucus shares with this government, as well as with the local governments that have already shown leadership in this area. I look forward to hearing from British Columbians on their priorities for action on plastics.”

British Columbians are encouraged to comment on the recommendations until Sept. 18, 2019.

Quick Facts:

- B.C. is a leader in creating industry led EPR recycling programs, currently with more programs than any other jurisdiction in North America.
- B.C.'s 22 industry-led EPR recycling programs cover 14 different product categories of consumer products such as packaging, electronics and electrical products, residual solvents, beverage containers, tires and household hazardous wastes.
- 315,000 tonnes of plastics, such as those in electronics, beverage containers and other packaging are already captured annually in B.C.’s EPR programs.
- Data demonstrates that shifting from the current range of five to 20 cents to a flat rate of 10 cents would increase the return rate of beverage containers.
- The existing program for packaging and paper products was recently expanded to include other soft plastics, including laminated/zippered pouches, crinkly plastics such as bags in cereal boxes and foil-lined potato chip bags, all of which can be taken to almost 200 recycling depots throughout the province.
- To address marine-sourced plastics and abandoned vessels, the Province appointed Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo, as the minister’s special advisor on marine plastic debris.

Learn More:

Learn more about the Province’s approach to plastics: <https://cleanbc.gov.bc.ca/plastics>

Learn more about the industry led blue box program: <https://recyclebc.ca/>

Learn more about CleanBC: <https://cleanbc.gov.bc.ca/>

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