

Last Updated: May 9, 2019

Regulation of Single-Use Checkout Bags

Please note: the regulation/ban of single-use plastic checkout bags has not been approved. Preliminary approvals were given on May 8 by the RDNO Board of Directors, and changes may occur to the Bylaw before it is considered for adoption final adoption. The following includes the proposed regulations and is for convenience and information, and may be updated.

When will the ban come into effect?

At the very earliest, January 2020. At this stage, the regulation Bylaw has only received first reading from the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) Board at the May 8, 2019, Regular Board Meeting. The RDNO will work with member municipalities, and the intent is for the regulations to be put in place by each municipality at the same time, if approved.

Who will the ban effect?

If the Bylaw is approved, North Okanagan businesses will not be allowed to offer their customers plastic or biodegradable/compostable checkout bags. Customers will be encouraged to bring reusable bags with them, or expect to purchase a reusable bag or paper bag.

What is a single-use checkout bag?

A single-use checkout bag is a plastic bag that cannot withstand 100 uses. Plastic bags marketed as "biodegradable" or "compostable" are also defined as plastic bags and included within the ban.

Should businesses offer biodegradable or compostable checkout bags?

No. Plastic bags marketed as "biodegradable" or "compostable" do not degrade easily without industrial compost facilities. These products are problematic for recycling machines if they are mistaken for and mixed with conventional plastic bags.

A common type of biodegradable plastic is made with oxo-biodegradable plastics. This material is made from petroleum based products, like regular plastic, and contains an added chemical substance that speeds up their decay. There is a growing concern that oxo-biodegradable plastics do not simply disappear when they decay. Instead, they leave harmful plastic pieces in the environment as well as heavy metal residues resulting from the additives in these plastics. Therefore biodegradable and compostable bags will be included in the ban.

Where will the ban be put into effect?

If the Bylaw is approved, Electoral Areas and Member Municipalities within the RDNO boundaries will be affected. This includes:

City of Armstrong	Electoral Area “B”
District of Coldstream	(Swan Lake/Commonage)
City of Enderby	Electoral Area “C” (BX/Silver Star)
Village of Lumby	
Township of Spallumcheen	Electoral Area “D” (Rural Lumby)
City of Vernon	Electoral Area “E” (Cherryville)
	Electoral Area “F” (Rural Enderby)

What types of bags are businesses allowed to offer as checkout bags?

If the Bylaw is approved, reusable or paper bags will be allowed as checkout bags.

How much will reusable and paper bags cost customers?

If the Bylaw is approved, customers will be charged no less than 15 cents per paper bag and \$1 per reusable bag.

Why ban plastic checkout bags? Aren’t there other single-use plastics that should be banned?

There are many types of single-use plastics that can also be banned. The RDNO is taking it one step at a time, and has chosen checkout bags as a starting point as they are one of the most commonly improperly recycled single-use plastics. By starting with one type of single-use plastic, there is better potential for widespread support than if the ban included multiple product categories like straws and foam containers.

Also, multiple other cities have banned single-use plastic checkout bags. Because of this, the RDNO has been able to research existing bylaws and learn from their implementation. Based on the success of an initial single-use checkout bag regulation (if approved), these additional product categories may be considered for regulation in the future.

I reuse my plastic bags, so they are not “single-use”. Why should we ban them when they can be used time after time?

Single-use plastic is defined as plastic that is useable less than 100 times. Plastic checkout bags begin to degrade after each use, and are generally not usable after 100 times leading to them being thrown in the garbage or recycling.

Plastic bags also require resources to be made, shipped, recycled or landfilled, and if they are discarded as litter, they pollute our land and water.

What about boxes of garbage bags or sandwich bags?

If the Bylaw is approved, the Bylaw will not regulate or restrict the sale of bags intended for use at the customer's home or business, provided that they are sold in packages of multiple bags.

What else needs to happen for the ban to be put in place?

The Bylaw will still require input from Member Municipalities, adoption by the Board, and legal review before it can be considered for adoption.

What is the goal of this Bylaw?

Ultimately, the Bylaw is aimed at reducing negative environmental impacts by encouraging consumers to bring their own reusable bags with them while shopping and to discourage the use of single-use checkout bags.

Is the RDNO asking other levels of government to address single-use plastic?

Yes. The RDNO has sent a letter to the BC Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy requesting a province-wide ban on single-use plastic. A province-wide approach would be beneficial as it would create a consistent regulation from community to community. The RDNO will continue to work towards taking immediate actions regionally while advocating for province-wide regulations which can have a wider impact.

Should businesses throw away their existing plastic bags?

No. The Bylaw has not been adopted, and the proposed timeline will include time for businesses to use up their existing stock of plastic bags and allow for consumers to access and become more accustomed to using reusable bags.