

# STAFF REPORT

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee From: Carolynn Pegura, Environmental Services Coordinator Date: 2025-05-15

Subject: Proposed Car Seat Recycling Pilot Program

Reviewed by:Lance Lilley, Manager of Environmental Services<br/>David Urban, Deputy Director of Regional Services<br/>Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services/ Deputy CAO<br/>Kelly Lownsbrough, Director of Corporate Services & CFO<br/>Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer

### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** the Fraser Valley Regional District Board authorize staff to proceed with a two-year pilot project for the collection and recycling of child car seats.

### BACKGROUND

Child and infant car seats are made up of multiple types of materials (e.g., plastic, metal, fabric, Styrofoam). While the majority of the components are recyclable, most used infant and child car seats are not recycled. They usually are disposed of at a landfill instead because they are not easily taken apart and they are not currently part of a Provincially regulated extended producer responsibility program. Not only does this represent a waste of potentially reusable or recyclable materials, but because they are so bulky, they take up unnecessary space in the landfills.

While the reuse of products is typically preferred, it is not an option for child and infant car seats due to their expiration dates (6-10 years after purchase depending on the manufacturer) and safety guidelines. British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA) indicates that the number of child car seats disposed of each year in BC is estimated at between 85,000 – 100,000<sup>1</sup>, an unfortunately significant number given the space these take up in landfills and the potential for diversion. There is a facility in Hope that will accept child car seats and will recycle the metal components by shredding the seat and extract the metal components using magnets, but there are no facilities available in the rest of the region and no facilities within the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) that are able to fully disassemble and recycle the majority of the components.

Reclaim Plastics, a company based in the Lower Mainland, was historically focused on the refurbishment and recycling of automotive bumpers. In recent years, they have discovered that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> BCAA Website: <u>https://www.bcaa.com/community/community-programs/child-passenger-safety/</u>

plastic contained within infant and child car seats is the same composition as many of the products they were already recycling. As a result, Reclaim Plastics expanded their operations to include the recycling of child and infant car seats. For a fee, Reclaim Plastics manually takes apart each child car seat into its main components:

- Plastic (which makes up the majority of the car seat)
- Metal frame and screws
- Styrofoam padding, and
- Textiles.

Plastic is shredded and processed into pellets for remanufacture. Metal is sent for recycling. Styrofoam is compressed and recycled. Textiles are the lone portion that are non-recyclable which gets sent for disposal.

## DISCUSSION

In an effort to increase diversion and recycling from within the FVRD, a two-year pilot program is proposed with Reclaim Plastics to collect and recycle child and infant car seats. Reclaim Plastics would provide "super sacks" (temporary collection bins) for collecting car seats from within the region. Each super sack can hold approximately 14 seats and requires storage on pallets for easy transport. The super sacks would be picked up by Reclaim Plastics monthly or when full. The cost is \$280 per super sack per month, which includes the cost of transporting, manually disassembling, and recycling (i.e., \$20/car seat). Collection sites are proposed in Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack, but exact locations have not yet been confirmed. If all three locations are used, the pilot program has the potential to collect and divert over 1,000 child and infant car seats that would otherwise have gone to a landfill.

Data collected throughout the project will help create a baseline for determining car seat disposal rates in the FVRD, which will also support the case for a provincial car seat recycling program. The pilot program will also help inform the update of the Solid Waste Management Plan.

## COST

The maximum cost for the two-year pilot program, assuming monthly collections and three collection sites, is \$23,520. Costs will be lower if less frequent collections are required. Proposed funds are available within the regional solid waste budget (402) for efforts to increase diversion.

## CONCLUSION

When at the end of their safe and usable life, child and infant car seats are challenging to recycle due to their multiple components. As a result, many unfortunately end up in a landfill. A two-year pilot **program is proposed to collect and recycle used car seats that will enhance the region's waste** reduction efforts, will increase diversion, and will help inform the Solid Waste Management Plan update.

#### COMMENTS BY:

Kelly Lownsbrough, Director of Corporate Services/CFO: While this is not a specifically identified budget initiative, funding for Waste Wise Implementation efforts to increase diversion exists within the budget.