

To: Fraser Valley Regional District Board

Date: 2018-09-25

From: Jamie Benton – Environmental Services Coordinator

File No: 5365-28

Subject: Recycle BC Packaging and Paper Product Extended Producer Responsibility Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board send a letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy outlining its air quality concerns for the Recycle BC pilot project which involves incineration of other flexible plastic packaging.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

PRIORITIES

Priority #1 Waste Management

Priority #2 Air & Water Quality

BACKGROUND

An Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) stewardship program for residential Packaging and Paper Product (PPP) has been operated by Recycle BC, a non-profit organization formerly known as Multi-Material BC, since May 2014. The program is funded by businesses, such as retailers, manufacturers and restaurants that supply packaging and paper product to BC residents. 156 communities participate in a Recycle BC recycling collection program and more are serviced by recycling depots that collect Recycle BC materials.

The EPR stewardship plan for PPP is mandated by the *British Columbia (BC) Recycling Regulation* (B.C. Reg, 449/2004) under the *Environmental Management Act*. The Recycling Regulation requires that each plan be reviewed and updated every five years. In late 2017 Recycle BC began a consultation process on its updated plan. The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) and its member municipalities were involved in this process and sent back extensive comments outlining support and concerns for the draft plan.

Most concerns were raised about a new pilot project for a category of materials known as “other flexible plastic packaging”, also known as multi-laminated materials. Recycle BC in partnership with Merlin Plastic are researching the best way to recycle this material category. Material that is unable to be recycled is being turned into an engineered fuel and burned at facilities in Metro Vancouver as a coal substitute. As of early June 2018, 116 depots across BC started collecting this material.

DISCUSSION

The FVRD is supportive of EPR, but expects all programs to meet local environmental and air quality objectives. This pilot project results in solid waste from our own region being burned and violates the FVRD approved Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Recycle BC's first consultation report, released in February 2018, makes reference to a high number of repeated comments and agreement about the negative environmental and health impacts of burning alternative fuel, particularly in sensitive and confined airsheds like the FVRD's.

Despite the number of concerns raised about the pilot project, which question the claimed environmental benefit and request for any informed studies used in the decision making process to be shared, Recycle BC have ignored these. In July 2018, Recycle BC updated their draft EPR program plan again which made some progress concerning new collection of materials like single use items and improved recovery rates. No concessions were made about the new pilot project. Environmental and health concerns have once again been reiterated in consultation feedback which ended on September 6th 2018.

Moreover, collection of flexible plastic packaging creates a false impression to the general public who believe this material is being recycled. It is disingenuous to people and raises concerns about what will happen with new materials accepted into the program. More transparency is needed. The onus should be placed on the producers of packaging to find recyclable alternatives and to discourage the use of hard to recycle materials by increasing producer payments for these materials. A growing number of companies are making commitments around the world to increase and improve plastics recycling. Recycle BC needs to advocate for more action by companies and drive innovation further up the packaging chain.

COST

n/a

CONCLUSION

In a new PPP EPR plan by Recycle BC, a new category of materials namely "other flexible plastic packaging" are being collected and burned as part of research and development. This contravenes our approved SWMP as solid waste from our region is collected and used as alternative fuel at facilities in Metro Vancouver, adding to air quality concerns for our region. Despite extensive consultation processes and repeated feedback that this pilot is not good for our region, our concerns are not being noticed. This should be raised with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Deputy Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported.

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

No further financial comments.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported