

NEWS RELEASE

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Council moves forward to eliminate plastic checkout bags

Summary

At their October 19, 2020 meeting, Council passed three readings of Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw 2020 No. 7283. The bylaw will now be forwarded to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy for approval. The City expects that the Province will approve its bylaw within three to six months, after which it will return to Council for adoption with an effective date of July 1, 2021.

The Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw encourages the use of reusable bags by eliminating use of plastic bags and sets fees for paper bags and new reusable bags. Paper bags need to contain at least 40% post-consumer recycled content and be labelled as recyclable. Reusable bags should be washable and capable of at least 100 uses. Informed by public consultation conducted in 2019, the regulation lists exemptions including but not limited to small paper bags, bags for bulk foods and produce, wrap for flowers, and multi-packs of plastic bags. The regulation prohibits compostable and biodegradable checkout bags.

Prior to implementation, the City will launch an education campaign to assist residents and businesses with the transition.

Nanaimo's Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw would compliment the federal and provincial governments movements to reduce harmful single-use plastics, and support the waste reduction goals set out in the Regional District of Nanaimo's Solid Waste Management Plan.

Strategic Link: Taking a leadership role in protecting our natural environment and our municipal infrastructure.

Key Points

- On October 19, 2020 Nanaimo City Council passed three readings of Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw 2020 No. 7283. Prior to final adoption, the bylaw requires approval from the provincial Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.
- The Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw encourages use of reusable bags by regulating the distribution of plastic bags, paper bags and new reusable bags.
- Checkout bags labelled 'compostable' or 'biodegradable' are prohibited under the new bylaw, as some of these form harmful micro-plastics as they degrade.
- Pending Provincial approval, the bylaw comes into effect on July 1, 2021. This gives time for retailers to adjust their delivery and work through any existing stock of bags.

Quotes

"Reducing plastic use is a not just a symbolic gesture. It is a real step forward in saving the planet and Nanaimo must and is playing its part."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"Many Nanaimo residents and businesses are already leading the way in reducing single-use checkout bags. We look forward to working with our citizens to achieve our Zero Waste goals."

Kirsten Gellein
Zero Waste Coordinator
City of Nanaimo

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Contact:

Taaj Daliran
Manager, Sanitation, Recycling and Cemeteries
City of Nanaimo
250-758-5222

Kirsten Gellein
Zero Waste Coordinator
City of Nanaimo
250-758-5222



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