

## ORGANIC WASTE

# City bans food scraps from trash

## Next year, all compostable refuse will be diverted from landfills

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VANCOUVER SUN

For as long as people have eaten, tossing out the remains of meals has been a fact of life. But now, with a renewed push to cut greenhouse gases and reduce mankind's environmental footprint, Vancouver city council is mandating that all food scraps and green waste will have to be recycled as of next year.

On Tuesday, city council agreed to include privately-serviced multi-unit residential buildings, hotels, restaurants, grocery stores and other commercial and industrial waste generators in a plan to divert all compostable materials from the city's landfill and transfer stations effective Jan. 1, 2015.

Vancouver began food scraps recycling two years ago for single-family dwellings and some city-serviced, multi-unit buildings, but that only accounts for a third of all organic waste in the city. The program is similar to one carried out in many other Metro Vancouver municipalities.

This plan requiring all waste generators to divert their compostable materials by 2015 is an effort to meet a similar Metro Vancouver ban on all organic waste at regional landfills.

So far, only Burnaby has implemented a program to recover organics from multi-unit residences, and no municipality has captured organic waste from industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) producers.

For the 152,000 Vancouver apartment dwellers who now don't have organics collection, the process won't be significantly different than that faced by householders, according to Peter Judd, Vancouver's general manager of engineering. They will have to put their wet waste into buckets and take them down to collection bins in their building's garbage area.

There is one significant difference: the city largely doesn't offer pickup service for multi-unit buildings and the ICI sector.



WARD PERRIN/PNG FILES

**In a bid to reduce the creation of methane gas at landfills, Vancouver city council has ordered that effective Jan. 1, 2015, compostable materials from all sources must be recycled.**

As a result, managers and strata corporations of 3,900 privately-serviced buildings will have to work with their commercial waste haulers to implement the new city directive.

Work on that element has been underway for a while, with some commercial haulers already prepared to begin separated organic waste removal, Judd said.

The multi-unit and ICI sectors — which produce 70 per cent of the city's organic waste — are the big prizes in Vancouver's effort to reduce waste at landfills by 50 per cent by 2020 over 2008 levels.

Initially, the city intends to educate people about the need to remove all organics from their garbage. But beginning in July 2015, the city will start penalizing large producers of waste at a rate of 50 per cent of the tipping fee for garbage loads that contain too much wet waste. Beginning in 2016, medium producers will be targeted, and in 2017, small generators — typically homeowners — could face fines.

Judd said homeowners are still being encouraged to compost material themselves. But getting compostable material out of the landfill is a major objective, especially in light of a provincial

order that landfills must cut their methane gas production by three quarters by 2016.

"Food scraps and compostable material going into the landfill create methane gas. Methane is far, far more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, which comes from composting," he said. "Even meeting the provincial regulation of 75 per cent recovery of landfill gases by 2016, that 25 per cent still being emitted is still equivalent to about 30,000 automobiles."

Some of the city's larger chain restaurants, stores, hotels and producers have already put food scraps diversion programs in place. But most smaller businesses don't have such programs, he said.

"You need to work with prime haulers to put in place programs that support the alternative program."

Judd said there are some obstacles to success; people won't like the "yuck factor" and the extra work required, and some buildings will have space limitations. There will also be additional costs as waste haulers account for the extra work.

"The enforcement action is graduated. That gives time for businesses and multi-family buildings to work with their

garbage collector and get a program in place without risking fines," he said. "It is more about communication and education than regulation at this point."

Meanwhile, the Greater Vancouver Regional District's Zero Waste Committee on Tuesday supported a U.K.-based initiative that aims to cut food waste in B.C. by educating consumers about such things as best-before dates, food storage tips and menu ideas.

Metro Vancouver has started talks with the U.K.'s Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to develop a Metro Vancouver Love Food — Hate Waste behaviour change campaign.

Committee member and Surrey Council. Barinder Rasode said the program is a great start.

"I think the Love Food — Hate Waste program is a really valuable program as we look at the amount of organic waste that's generated through households because we're such a consumer society. I think this is just the beginning and I'm very happy to support this program."

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With a file from Brian Morton,  
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