

Metro Vancouver's garbage export ban advances despite opposition



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It may soon fall to the province to decide whether Metro Vancouver can ban the export of garbage beyond its boundaries, putting what some say is an unfair limit on business.

A proposed waste flow bylaw that's been fought by garbage haulers was swiftly approved by Metro's zero waste committee Oct. 3 and is expected to get support from the full board Friday, sending it to the provincial environment ministry for approval.

The committee vote was 6-2 in favour, with West Vancouver Mayor Michael Smith and Langley City Coun. Gayle Martin opposed.

The bylaw would ban shipments to unapproved out-of-region destinations, such as an Abbotsford transfer station that is capturing a growing share of the waste business.

Some haulers pay an estimated \$70 per tonne to dump there, rather than \$107 per tonne charged by Metro Vancouver at in-region transfer stations, and they don't face Metro-imposed bans on dumping various recyclables.

Their ability to undercut other haulers that pay full Metro tipping fees and abide by the bans are resulting in a growing flow of garbage east that Metro directors say must be stopped so the regional district isn't bled of critical revenue.

"Waste is leaving the system and that means we're not achieving our environmental goals, our diversion goals and we're losing revenue to support Metro Vancouver programs," said Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie, who chairs the waste committee.

Some business groups have denounced the bylaw as one that will force customers to pay more than necessary.

Their objections have been amplified by paid lobbyists – including former BC Liberal MLA [John Les](#) (Chilliwack), who represents the Cache Creek landfill operators – as well as some Metro directors.

"I don't think Metro Vancouver should be creating a monopoly on something like garbage," Smith said Friday, arguing the region shouldn't frustrate free enterprise or business creativity in finding new waste solutions.

"Metro Vancouver continues on a crash course to raise costs for residents and businesses alike," Grant Hankins, district manager for hauling firm BFI Canada, told the committee. "You're picking winners and losers."

An earlier version of the bylaw was [defeated](#) in September but it was quickly retooled and revived.

One change would allow cities [to exempt](#) specific apartment buildings from the requirement coming in 2015 to separate all organic food waste.

Garbage from those buildings would have to go to an approved [material recovery facility](#) (MRF) where organics and other recyclables would be extracted from waste.

The bylaw creates some room for mixed-waste MRFs, which proponents say could pull out much more recyclable material that's now dumped or

incinerated, helping lift the poor 15 per cent recycling rate in multifamily buildings.

Exempting select older apartment buildings from the organics ban will also solve a major problem for cities, which weren't sure how it could be implemented in some cases.

Metro has been accused of trying to pen up garbage in the region to feed a future new garbage incinerator.

But the bylaw is also backed by recycling businesses that say they have flourished under Metro's source separation policies, which would be undermined without the imposition of flow control rules.

"If all this material was being exported or if all this material was being owned by haulers who have transfer stations we would never have access to this material," said Nicole Stefenelli of the Recycle First Coalition.

The Cache Creek landfill would continue to be an approved regional facility under the new rules, at least until Metro opens a new waste-to-energy plant and stops using the Interior dump. Some incineration opponents hope that plan fails and Metro is forced to keep trucking waste to Cache Creek.

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