

# Recycling regulations changing

*Multi Material BC program comes into effect in May*

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New recycling regulations starting this May could not only see an increase in recyclable materials in the blue box but also an increase in many household budgets.

The regulations, which include the Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Plan, or PPP, are intended to shift the responsibility of the "end-of-life" of products from taxpayers to industry and include an extended list of additional materials eligible for curbside pickup.

But the shift could come at a cost, increasing fees to businesses selling or distributing products, including paper, and potentially emptying consumers' wallets for businesses to meet those additional costs.

Allen Langdon, managing director at Multi Material BC, the not-for-profit organization in charge of the changes, said the plan is the latest in 20 programs where industry is being asked to take responsibility for "end-of-life" management of their materials or products.

"For the resident it means that their municipal taxes no longer have to pay for the end of life; what it means is industry will now be contributing to paying for the collection process and transportation of that PPP and taking that burden off municipalities."

The plan is part of the changes to the provincial recycling regulations, a change that required producers to submit whether or not they wanted to be involved by Nov. 19, 2012.

Douglas Pope, director of engineering, parks and environment for the City of North Vancouver, said the municipalities, including the three North Shore municipalities, did not have direct control over the changes.

"The program has, in a sense, been imposed on



us," said Pope. "We had an option of either continuing with the status quo of 100 per cent of the costs going to municipalities and the municipal taxpayers, or coming on and signing on with MMBC."

Pope said they had two options: giving MMBC complete control, including pickup services, or signing on to receive an incentive to continue their own blue box program. The municipalities chose the latter, signing on with MMBC for a year with a possible one-year extension, and will continue to have the North Shore Recycling Program maintain pickup services.

Pope said the good news is that costs will be going down.

"Costs to the municipalities for recycling will be less in 2014 when this goes ahead," he said.

"So what we're going to get is \$38 for every single family home that we collect recycling from this year from MMBC to offset our recycling costs and we will be passing on savings to the taxpayer."

Though the incentive will decrease costs for taxpayers, Pope said it still falls short of covering full recycling fees.

"The \$38 incentive that we're going to be getting from industry through MMBC only really covers about half of the actual collection cost that the municipalities are incurring," he said. "We think it's a good start that this program's getting put in place but there needs to be further dialogue and improvements to the system so that it actually covers our costs."

The District of West Vancouver will receive

a \$37 incentive from MMBC.

Collection rates at the District of North Vancouver will increase from \$91 in 2013 to \$94.20 in 2014 for a single-family home.

Gavin Joyce, general manager of engineering, parks and facilities for the District of North Vancouver, said the three North Shore municipalities expect to recover \$1.5-million from the MMBC incentive. Joyce said at this point they are maintaining the status quo through the year as the three municipalities transition.

"We just weren't all that comfortable enough with the ins and outs," said Joyce. "Nobody can really give you a conclusive answer on the service level, the costs and what the system's going to look like."

While larger businesses

will have to pay fees, smaller businesses will be exempt if they have less than \$1 million in annual revenue, less than one tonne of PPP supplied to consumers, and operate as a single point of retail sale, or not as part of a franchise.

Mike Klassen, director of provincial affairs at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said the new costs "could be a heavy burden for some businesses," including smaller franchises.

"In some cases, for a small pizza shop for example, it could work out to be over \$400 a week in new fees... That's a lot of pizzas you need to sell in order to recoup your costs," said Klassen. "There's only so much profit per pizza and so that means you have to sell a lot in order to try and make up

that or you're going to have to increase your prices."

Businesses could be paying anywhere from a few thousand dollars per month to, depending on the business, more than a hundred thousand dollars per year in terms of costs and fees that they're currently not paying, said Klassen.

"The fact is that consumers will be paying more, they have to, there's just no way you can absorb these kinds of costs without passing them along ultimately to consumers," he said. "And so that means for your household budget, you're going to be paying more for no increase in service."

Although the new regulations accept more materials in the blue box — including paper drink cups, spiral-bound cans used for juice, chips and cookie dough; milk cartons and Tetra Paks — other items, such as glass, either have to be separated or, in some municipalities, taken directly to a depot.

Jenn Meilleur, communications and community programs co-ordinator at North Shore Recycling Program, said that while glass will not be refused if placed in the blue box, North Shore residents are being asked to take glass directly to the depot free of charge.

"There are three things that will be depot only for free: glass, plastic bags and Styrofoam," said Meilleur. "The plastic bags and Styrofoam are included in that expanded list but those items also contaminate the other items if they were included in the blue box, so those are depot only."

Meilleur said for now they would not be tagging people for having glass in their blue boxes; however, they encourage residents to take it to the depot.

"This is a pretty big change, so we're trying to provide people with information about it," she said. "We're trying to learn more about it as well, so we're really seeing this as a transition period."

Langdon said MMBC asked their collectors to segregate glass based on a study they did back in 2011. "We found that based on the evidence and

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# Some businesses singing blue-box blues

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the data we were able to find that we could only see about 10 per cent of the glass being supplied into the marketplace was actually being recycled," he said. "So it gets collected but often during the collection and sorting process, it breaks down into such a small size that it often ends up going to landfill."

Langdon said they also found that broken glass would lodge into other materials, such as plastic and fibres.

"That then impacts the ability to recycle those materials. So we think by segregating glass we'll

recycle more glass, but we'll also recycle more plastics and papers," he said.

Matt Torgerson, committee chair of the Waste Management Association of B.C., said that although glass can degrade other materials and be more difficult to sell in market, waste management companies have developed systems and found markets for the product.

"A lot of our glass heads south as an aggregate product," said Torgerson. "It did degrade the product, it did not make it a non-recyclable item."

Torgerson said one example of such a system is

Emterra Group, a recycling company with locations across Canada, which offers a single-stream recycling. The single-stream pulls all recyclable materials, including glass, together and through a mechanical system segregates them into their respective streams.

"So we were never worried about the product," he said. "We as waste haulers, we know what happens when you make recycling hard, it goes into the garbage stream. You're not going to get in your car and take a couple of glass jars to the depot."

The Waste Management Association of B.C.,

along with the CFIB, the Canadian Newspaper Association and six other businesses and associations, have formed a coalition called #RethinkItBC to protest the new regulations.

"We're moving forward with a multitude of other associations from around B.C. to basically pause this program," said Torgerson. "Basically we're asking the government, continue to ask the government, to take this back to the drawing board. There's some big issues with this that we've never seen before in the province of B.C."

Peter Kvarnstrom, chairman of the Canadian Newspaper Association, as well as president of B.C. operations at Glacier Media Group, North Shore News' parent company, said the new regulations would do nothing to improve the already high recovery rate of newsprint at 89 per cent, well above the government target of 75 per cent.

"We basically have a great system in place now and the government has taken it upon themselves to reinvent it and contract it out to corporate interests



The new provincewide recycling plan would see glass containers removed from blue-box collection. PHOTO MIKE WAKEFIELD

# Newspapers form coalition

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that are creating the majority of the waste in the recycling system now," said Kvarnstrom.

Newspapers could face a bill of upward of \$14 million annually, he said, with almost no ability to pass that cost on to consumers.

"The money has to come from somewhere," said Kvarnstrom. "The reality will be that it will come from job losses, reduced coverage, editorial, lesser quality, lesser debate and in some cases the potential loss of the community papers servicing communities, small and large."

Torgerson said the coalition is seeing a lot of funding issues with the regulations. "We're going to see some big problems on them trying to collect the money they promised the municipalities," he said.

Klassen said he thinks British Columbians and small businesses are very supportive of measures to reduce waste and to continue to ensure the province has the best

recycling in the world. "But at the same time, it has to be put forward in a practical way that isn't going to force businesses to close or lay off staff."

Klassen said this plan has impacted a lot of sectors in B.C.'s economy, including community newspapers, farms and people in the recycling industry. "Had this been done properly from the beginning, businesses would have been consulted," he said. "And government would have been able to get British Columbians' ideas on how to improve these services without having to go out of province."

The new regulations go into effect May 19.



Kevin Skett, supervisor at NSRP's Recycling Drop-off Depot on Riverside Drive, sorts refundable glass bottles and non-refundable glass jars. For now, glass will not be refused if put out for collection in your blue box. PHOTO **MIKE WAKEFIELD**