

July 12, 2019

Mayor & Council
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Dear Mayor & Council,

RE: SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND OTHER ITEMS BYLAW

Following the resolutions passed at the May 21, 2019 Special Council meeting, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce (RCC) began consultation with the local business community, focusing on the impact (either positive or negative) that a ban on single-use plastics would have for Richmond businesses and non-profit organizations.

With a proposed implementation date of January 1, 2020, businesses have a short runway to become educated on the policy, source alternatives, and make changes. With that in mind, the RCC is engaged in an aggressive outreach campaign, determined to highlight the key issues and factors the City of Richmond should consider in implementing these policies.

Beginning Thursday, June 27, 2019, an online survey, available in English and Simplified Chinese was promoted at RichmondChamber.ca, as well as through social media, a door knocking campaign, and in the local press. (Full Survey Text: Appendix I)

This issue is important to many Richmond business owners, and responses will continue to be accepted. That said, RCC can provide some early data trends and feedback to help frame this discussion.

TIMING OF IMPLEMENTATION

In general, Richmond's business community is showing support of a single-use plastics ban at some point. So far, about a quarter of respondents are saying the proposed January 1, 2020 implementation date is about the right time. However, over 50% of respondents let us know that they need more time to prepare (at least a year).

Learning from the lesson of our neighbour, Vancouver (who began discussions on a Single-Use Plastic bylaw in 2016, but ultimately found a 2019 implementation date too expeditious), this

wide-reaching bylaw must be brought forward in a measured way, including robust consultation with the business community.

Cathy Cheung of Sinfully the Best told us, “the process of re-designing, sourcing and producing new packaging material take more than 7 months. The transition would be hard on many small businesses. We need a comprehensible guideline from the policy makers.”

Jim van der Tas of Blue Canoe restaurant had this to say: “Although I totally agree with the initiative to move away from single-use plastics, I strongly believe that more time for small business to research alternative options is needed. Also, more time is needed for new companies and or new alternative products to hit the market at a reasonable price. Rushing it may hurt some small businesses and the city has the option to alleviate that pain.”

UNCERTAINTY AND LACK OF AWARENESS

Though there are less than six months until this proposed bylaw would come into force, we have found that over 40% of respondents were completely unaware of this change until they were presented with our survey. Only 15% of survey takers reported being “very aware” of the proposed by-law.

Reading the definition of plastic checkout bag, bags that decompose completely are also included in the ban (as well as synthetic fabric re-useable bags). This would stymie local green innovation – notably, Layfield’s BioFlex plastic.

A local non-profit, the Richmond Curling Club reports that “the biggest challenge we face is being a non-profit and trying to find cost-effective replacements. Prior to this initiative we have been looking for affordable alternatives but not yet found reasonable sources.”

Though the proposed bylaw makes provisions for specialty beverages, local business owners seem to be in the dark about this. Roy Song, of Happy Lemon bubble tea told us, “our business relies on plastic cups, lids, sealing film, and straws. Currently, there is no working biodegradable plastic alternatives. The ban will destroy the bubble tea business.” Awareness is low, and business uncertainty is very high.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHAMBER

The RCC supports the City of Richmond’s push for provincial leadership at the UBCM, in accordance with the 2019 BC Chamber of Commerce Policy “Working with and Supporting Business to Act on Plastic Waste” (Appendix II).

However, after this first stage of business consultation, we urge you not to rush implementation of this bylaw. Additionally, the July 11th unanimous decision by B.C.'s court of appeal over Victoria's recent ban of single-use plastic bags, must be cause for pause and reflection of the current policy approach.

We urge you to delay the enactment of this new bylaw to at least January 2021. This is the minimum amount of time necessary to allow our city's employers to become educated on the guidelines, source affordable alternatives, and deplete current stock.

Like you, we want Richmond to be a leader in a way that is effective and achieves the desired outcomes. In closing, we thank you for considering our feedback and look forward to working with Council and staff as the new Single-Use Plastics and Other Items Bylaw is considered.

Sincerely,



Fan Chun
Chair, Richmond Chamber of Commerce