



Media Release

For Immediate Release

Canada Takes Action on Plastics

Vancouver, June 11, 2019 - Yesterday, the Government of Canada announced a move to reduce plastic waste and work to develop a more sustainable circular economy. These actions includes a Canada-wide Zero Plastic Waste Action Plan to coordinate federal efforts with the provinces and territories that have jurisdiction for waste and recycling.

The primary focus of this initiative includes a science-based ban on single-use plastics by 2021 (plastic bags, straws, utensils, plates, clamshells, cups, etc.) to reduce pollution from plastic products and packaging. It also calls for provinces and territories to apply policy instruments such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) to make companies that sell plastic products and packaging responsible for the environmental management of their products at end of use.

The Recycling Council of British Columbia, (RCBC) a multi-sectoral nonprofit that promotes circular economy principles, expects the federal government's plan to include regulatory interventions, industry-based approaches, as well as investments in science and innovation. RCBC encourages all levels of government to demonstrate similar leadership through a collaborative systems approach to eliminate waste. One solution towards achieving these goals may be through a more harmonized approach to EPR in Canada.

BC currently leads Canada in its approach to EPR through the BC recycling regulation. The Council supports any move to advance towards a more effective EPR system in which companies are responsible to collect and recycle materials they sell into the marketplace. National EPR standards, harmonizing definitions, performance metrics, goals, and standards could reduce current barriers and lead to greater efficiencies and economies of scale in recycling efforts across the country for plastics and well as other materials.

Canadians toss three million tonnes of plastics away annually, wasting approximately \$8 billion per year in lost value. One third of all plastics used in Canada are single-use items and packaging. This includes up to 15 billion plastic bags annually and more than 50 million straws that are used on a daily basis.

As well, 640,000 tons of lost or abandoned fishing gear enters our waterways and oceans, persisting in the environment for up to 600 years. Every year, one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals worldwide are injured or die when they mistake plastic for food or become entangled. One garbage truckload of plastic waste enters the oceans of our planet every minute, an amount that is steadily increasing.

If you are concerned about plastic waste and other related matters, RCBC is holding a free public forum on future EPR priorities June 26 from 9am to noon at the UBC Robson Square Theatre. Interested parties may register through this link: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/rcbc-forum-on-future-epr-priorities-tickets-60943268958>

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