
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Reducing plastic waste, pollution a shared responsibility

VICTORIA – Four new single-use plastics bans have been approved in B.C. communities to reduce plastic waste throughout the province, highlighting the new provincial Plastic Pollution Awareness Day.

“This is a day for us to recognize the progress we’ve made and commit to redoubling our efforts moving forward,” said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. “Through our CleanBC Plastics Action Plan, we’re reducing plastic use overall, expanding our deposit-refund system, calling on manufacturers to take more responsibility for their products’ end of life, developing better ways to recycle plastics into new products and implementing bans on single-use plastics.”

In proclaiming Monday, Feb. 15, 2021, as Plastic Pollution Awareness Day, Heyman announced the approval of bylaws banning single-use plastics in four more communities. Surrey, Nanaimo, Rossland and Esquimalt have joined five other municipalities that are implementing plastic bans tailored to the needs of their communities. The Province is also moving ahead on the regulatory groundwork to allow local governments to implement bans on single-use plastics without requiring provincial approval.

“Action on plastic pollution is critical to ensuring that our communities and environments remain healthy and safe,” said Chloé Dubois, co-founder and president, Ocean Legacy Foundation. “We applaud the leadership of this ministry and participating municipalities in implementing tailored community action plans on plastic management systems. Enhancing these tools are a necessary step to curb the harmful effects of plastic pollution everywhere.”

Addressing existing plastic pollution in the environment – especially in the oceans – came into sharp focus last summer through the largest coastal marine debris cleanup in B.C.’s history. Small ship tour operators, in partnership with Indigenous Nations and local communities, led efforts that removed over 127 tonnes of marine debris from the central coast and Queen Charlotte Sound shorelines in six weeks.

The shoreline cleanup was Phase 1 of government’s Clean Coast, Clean Waters Initiative Fund (CCCW) under the Plastics Action Plan. Phase 2 of CCCW funding was recently announced for more marine debris removal projects in 2021 as part of StrongerBC: BC’s \$10-billion Economic Recovery Plan that protects people’s health and livelihoods while supporting businesses and communities.

“Dedicated British Columbians and forward-thinking organizations have made our province a leader in the fight against plastic pollution,” Heyman said. “We’re showing what can be accomplished when we work together to protect our environment and confront this issue head

on.”

Manufacturers and retailers are also part of the solution, through extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs that require producers and sellers to manage the waste from their products. British Columbia is a leader in EPR recycling and continues to expand these programs. The recently announced Recycled Plastics Manufacturing Stimulus Fund will support technologies to turn used plastics into new products, support the circular economy of plastics, increase local processing capacity for recycling and create jobs.

Quick Facts:

- More than 40% of plastic is used only once.
- In 2019, 77% of all beverage containers and 46% of all residential plastic packaging was recovered for recycling.
- Of the plastics collected by Recycle BC, 98% stay in B.C. – supporting the recycling and manufacturing sector and growing the circular economy.
- It is estimated that in 2019, over 340,000 tonnes of plastic items and plastic packaging were disposed of in British Columbia. This equates to more than 65 kilograms of plastic waste landfilled per person in one year.
- Globally, it has been estimated more than 20 million tonnes of plastic waste enter aquatic ecosystems every year.
- In 2019, over 35,000 British Columbians responded to the CleanBC Plastics Action Plan consultation, with 94% of respondents reporting they were concerned about plastic waste and 86% stating it is important to seek out products with more recycled content.

Learn More:

Read the proclamation here:

<https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/proclamations/proclamations/2021procs>

The CleanBC Plastics Action Plan ‘What We Heard Report’ is available here:

<https://cleanbc.gov.bc.ca/plastics>

Learn more about the CleanBC Plastics Action Plan:

<https://cleanbc.gov.bc.ca/plastics>

Marine Debris in B.C. – What We Heard Report:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/waste-management/zero-waste/marine-debris-protection/marine_debris_what_we_heard_report_final_web.pdf?fbclid

For more information on the CCCW Initiative:

<https://www.bccleancoast.ca>

The RPMS Fund web page can be found here:

<https://www.alacritycanada.com/cleantech/bc-recycled-plastics-manufacturing-stimulus-fund/>

Contacts:

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
Strategy
Media Relations
250 953-3834

Ocean Legacy Foundation
Chloé Dubois
Co-founder and President
chloe@oceanlegacy.ca

Surrey:
Amber Stowe
Communications and Media Relations Lead
Amber.Stowe@surrey.ca
778 846-1480

Nanaimo:
Media Inquiries
MediaRequests@nanaimo.ca

Esquimalt:
Tara Zajac
Manager of Communications
Tara.Zajac@esquimalt.ca
250 414-7122

City of Rossland
Cynthia Anonuevo
Deputy Corporate Officer
dco@rossland.ca
250 362-9396

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