

DATE: August 31, 2021

FILE: 5380-02

TO: Chair and Directors
Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Reasonable Access to Recycling for Residents

Purpose

To provide input to the Stewardship Agencies of British Columbia (SABC) in response to their May 13, 2021 document “Guidance on Accessibility of Stewardship Programs” to advocate for reasonable and convenient access to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs for remote communities across British Columbia with tiered and funded solutions to lessen the financial burden on regional districts.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the letter as attached to the staff report dated August 31, 2021, which advocates for reasonable and convenient access to recycling for remote communities with tiered and funded solutions based on the remoteness index be developed in collaboration with local governments, be submitted to the Stewardship Agencies of British Columbia membership in response to their proposed *Guidance on Accessibility of Stewardship Programs* document.

Executive Summary

- SABC are an informal alliance of industry product stewardship organizations representing over 20 EPR programs. All of the EPR programs that are created under the BC *Recycling Regulation* to fund and organize collection and management of products like electronics, tires, oil, and packaging are a part of this alliance. <https://www.bcrecycles.ca/>
- In 2020, EPR programs worked with local governments, private depots and retailers to divert over 12,000 tonnes of these materials from Comox Strathcona Waste Management (CSWM) landfills and the environment. At \$140 per tonne, this would be \$1.68 million per year in avoided tipping fees and lost airspace.
- The British Columbia Product Stewardship Council (BCPSC) is a coalition of regional districts that come together to discuss common operational and policy related issues of the EPR programs in BC.
- The SABC and BCPSC meet regularly to try to improve the success of the EPR programs.
- SABC programs are typically funded through the collection of fees on the purchase of products or packaging, and are run by not-for-profit organizations that manage the programs as directed by a Board made up of companies which manufacture and sell the products. Their focus is on the cost effectiveness of the delivery of their programs while meeting their regulatory requirements.

- One of the key requirements of BC’s *Recycling Regulation* is for EPR programs to provide for “reasonable and free consumer access to collection facilities or collection services”.
- What is considered “reasonable” is not further defined, and this causes challenges when residents and local governments advocate for expanded services for EPR programs, such as depots, collection events, curbside programs or direct pick-up. These services cost money for EPR programs and the cost is much higher for rural and remote collection services, often with very small amounts of materials collected.
- The suggested 2021 Accessibility Framework within the Guidance on Accessibility is not ‘reasonable’ and will not provide for the service levels expected within our communities and by our residents.
 - It proposes to only provide EPR recycling service to remote communities “where practical”, this would include all of the island and west coast based communities within the CSWM
 - Staff agree that for smaller communities service levels will not match those in more urban communities, but would like to see more commitment for remote communities with tiered and funded solutions based on the remoteness index developed in collaboration with local governments.
 - Not addressed within the Guidance on Accessibility is acknowledgement of the volume of materials that a depot can accept, frequency of collection and the number of customers that the facility can safely accommodate.
- The CSWM service is very familiar with the challenges of providing waste services to urban, non-urban, rural and remote populations. The level of service and solutions for each community is not the same across the board, but in all of these communities we work with our local government partners to provide for the collection, transport and or disposal of municipal solid waste and to provide opportunities for recycling.
- As a local government we see benefit to having well defined expectations for service from SABC programs, it helps with our budgeting and for communicating expectations to residents, and so we strive to work with SABC on finding a standard that we can all stand behind.

Prepared by:

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Concurrence:

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Concurrence:

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Attachments: Appendix A – “August, 2021 Letter to SABC; Guidance on Accessibility of Stewardship Programs”

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File: 5380-02

August _____, 2021

Sent via email only:stewardsassociationbc@gmail.comrachel.morier@thebeerstore.ca

Stewardship Agencies of British Columbia Members
 c/o Rachel Morier
 Chair and Secretary of the Board
 BC Brewers Recycled Collection Council
 711 Kingsway Avenue
 Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 0B6

Dear SABC Members:

Re: Guidance on Accessibility of Stewardship Programs (Accessibility Framework)

The Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board thank you for your presentation to the BC Product Stewardship Council (BCPSC) group on May 19, 2021 on your proposed *Guidance on Accessibility of Stewardship Programs* (Guidance on Accessibility). We appreciate that the Stewardship Agencies of British Columbia (SABC) identified weaknesses in the 2013 SABC accessibility standard, and that you took the initiative to research, redraft and try to improve on it.

The Guidance on Accessibility document identifies a series of principles; the principles appear to communicate the positions of stewardship agencies, as compared to presenting accepted principles related to accessibility. At a high level, we agree that municipal solid waste (MSW) and recyclable material, as defined by the Environmental Management Act, includes discarded extended producer responsibility (EPR) program materials. While we agree that planning for the management of these materials must be included as part of a regional district's solid waste management plan (SWMP), we do not agree that regional districts are obligated to manage any part of the end-of-life care of these products.

Local governments may choose to become collectors for EPR programs with mutually agreeable collection contract terms. We do not agree that the Environmental Management Act obligates local governments to collect EPR materials either through depots, curbside programs, collection events or illegally dumped from the side of the road.

SABC Accessibility Framework

The Guidance on Accessibility by SABC proposes definitions for urban, non-urban and remote communities in BC.

- ***For Urban communities, collection within 15 kilometres***
 - “Urban” is proposed to consist of Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) as defined by Statistics Canada, which within BC only includes four communities:
 - Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna and Abbotsford-Mission.
- ***For Non-Urban communities, collection within 60 kilometres***
 - For the CSWM service, this equates to our entire population along the east coast of Vancouver Island of around 100,000 people
 - This would include Campbell River, Strathcona Electoral Area D, Comox Valley Electoral Areas A (excluding islands), B and C, Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland

Comox Strathcona Waste Management manages over 100,000 tonnes of waste and recycled material annually and oversees a number of diversion and education programs for the Strathcona and Comox Valley Regional Districts.

- ***For Remote communities, collections service where practical***
 - “Remote” communities are defined as “situated far from main centers of population; without reliable infrastructure (roads); or those that need to be accessed using alternate mechanisms”.
 - With “Remote” not well defined we cannot say for sure which areas within the CSWM service would be considered “Remote” but we are assuming it is all ferry accessible communities, and those with populations isolated greater than 60 kilometres from another populated centre.
 - Sayward, Gold River, Tahsis, Zeballos, Strathcona Electoral Areas A, B and C, Denman and Hornby Islands comprising approximately 8,300 residents
 - An additional 700 residents of First Nations communities within the CSWM

The CSWM service area is very familiar with the challenges of providing services to urban, non-urban, rural and remote populations. The level of service and solutions for each community is not the same across the board, but in all of these communities we work with our local government partners to provide for the collection, transport and or disposal of MSW and to provide opportunities for recycling.

The CSWM Board does not believe that the suggested 2021 Accessibility Framework within the Guidance on Accessibility is reasonable to provide for the service levels expected within our communities and by our residents.

Distance and Level of Effort

The use of ‘distance circles’ drawn around locations is not an adequate measure of the level of effort for a resident to access a facility. Current mapping programs using ESRI tools, or the Google Distance Matrix API are available to provide travel distance and time for a matrix of origins and destinations using the road network and real user data.

Population and Number of Depots

Not addressed within the Guidance on Accessibility is the volume of materials that a depot can accept, the frequency of collection and the number of customers that the facility can safely accommodate. With the expansion of EPR programs, especially the addition of printed paper and packaging (PPP), private depots within our region have outgrown their facilities and parking areas, causing nuisance to their neighbours and increased complaints. In addition, for the collection of PPP from residents without curbside recycling collection the demands on a depot are significantly higher than for areas entirely served by curbside collection of PPP. Having a single depot within a certain driving distance does not equate to an adequate service level, population served and their access to curbside recycling services must also be considered. For example, a single depot could not adequately serve a population of 200,000 people, even if they are within a 15 km drive distance, but that is not addressed within this proposal.

Finding new locations for depots in urban areas can be very difficult as they have become subject to objection due to a reputation for traffic congestion, being noisy, accumulating litter, and being frequented by the economically depressed population generating income through refundables.

Alternative - Remoteness Index

In Canada, population centres and statistical area classifications are widely used to distinguish urban and rural communities and have been referred to within the SABC proposal. However, neither of these classifications precisely classify Canadian communities into urban, rural and remote areas. Recognizing the limitations of working with CMAs and Census Agglomerations (CAs) in understanding the need for services in communities, a group of researchers at Statistics Canada developed an alternative tool called the “remoteness index” (RI) to measure the relative remoteness of Canadian census subdivisions (CSD).

The remoteness index is a more effective tool in determining levels of service required to meet a community's needs as it takes into consideration the proximity to centres of economic activity, the challenges of non-road access, and reflects the use of urban facilities and resources by nearby rural residents. It provides a value for each CSD between zero and one; the higher the RI the more remote the community. This range can be used to determine levels of recycling service required, depending on the program considerations at end-of-life.

The remoteness index was also compared to selected retail services within the economic and retail context of small communities for correlation: Motor vehicle and parts dealers; Electronics and appliance stores; Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers; Gasoline stations; and General merchandise stores. The RI was found to have a high correlation with this group of selected retail services which in the context of EPR, is particularly relevant. The use of the RI instead of the proposed urban, non-urban and remote community definitions proposed would more closely match recycling services with the communities where the original products are purchased.

Considerations for Remote Communities

We do not agree with the SABC statements that:

- “it is not possible to provide service to every location within the province”
- “Stewardship Programs should provide collection service to a specified percentage of the BC population”
- SABC members are only committed to provide service to remote communities “where practical”.

Local governments are acutely aware of the costs of managing waste streams in remote communities. We pay to staff facilities, to transport waste and to fund environmentally sound landfills for MSW. Where residents have access to MSW facilities they should expect to have access to EPR programs, diversion and recycling facilities. That is how we will work together to meet the ENV municipal solid waste disposal rate target of 350 kg/capita/year. Where there is no opportunity for diversion of EPR products, there is no diversion of EPR products.

The most significant costs for waste management from remote communities is the labour for facilities with fixed hours, and the transport of materials. Many EPR programs fund the collection of their materials based on the tonnage or amount accepted. In small communities of a few hundred people, this is an insignificant amount of money they are effectively not funding the labour portion of EPR collection for remote communities. Commitment to co-locating EPR programs with garbage facilities and matching recycling services with garbage services in remote communities would be a more acceptable proposal for accessibility.

If SABC members were to work collaboratively with each other to fund transportation of their materials from remote communities, cost savings for their programs would be achieved. They have used this model before to service First Nations and boat only accessible communities. Alternatively, a commitment to refunding local governments 100% of cost for coordinated transportation of EPR products out of remote communities would be a suitable alternative.

We agree that for smaller communities service levels will not match those in more urban communities, but we would like to see more commitment for remote communities with tiered and funded solutions based on the remoteness index developed in collaboration with local governments.

Path Forward

Although the initial development of the Guidance on Accessibility did not request participation from local governments, our expectation moving forward is that you will take into consideration the feedback that we and other local government partners provide on this document, and that you consider actively working

together to further improve the Guidance on Accessibility to the benefit of our common stakeholder, the resident and consumer.

We understand that the Guidance on Accessibility is not a standard, nor a regulatory requirement under the Recycling Regulation, and therefore does not hold regulatory standing, nor is it subject to Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV) approval. The CSWM does take this document quite seriously though, as in our experience Stewardship Agencies will refer to these “standards” in their Program Plans and have a propensity for citing this “standard” for accessibility when evaluating service levels for our residents. As a local government, we see the benefit to having well defined expectations for service from SABC programs, it helps us with our budgeting and for communicating expectations to residents, and so we strive to work with SABC on finding a standard that we can all stand behind.

As it is written now though, the CSWM service does not find this Guidance on Accessibility to be an improvement on the 2013 SABC accessibility standard.

We have common goals but different roles. We look forward to working with our local government partners, and SABC members to find an accessibility criteria that we can defend to our common stakeholders, and that we can use to bring accountability and economic stability to EPR programs to provide reasonable and convenient access to the residents of British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Chair

cc: **Sonya Sundberg**, Executive Director, Environmental Standards Branch, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Bob McDonald, Director, Extended Producer Responsibility, Environmental Standards Branch, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Jared Wright, Director of Advocacy and Government Relations, Union of BC Municipalities