

Business FAQs

Below are frequently asked questions received by City of Victoria from businesses during their Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw implementation process

What types of businesses are covered by the Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw?

All businesses operating within the District of Saanich.

What are the requirements for reusable bags?

The Bylaw defines a reusable bag as a “bag with handles that is for the purpose of transporting items purchased by the customer from and business and is: a) designed and manufactured to be capable of at least 100 uses, and b) primarily made out of cloth or other washable fabric.”

What are some examples of reusable checkout bags?

There are many types of reusable checkout bags that are designed to be capable of at least 100 uses. Examples of durable and reusable bags materials include:

- Synthetic fabrics like nylon, polyester and polypropylene (non-woven and woven polypropylene)
- Cotton or recycled cotton
- Other natural fabrics (e.g. hemp, jute)

What are some other factors to consider when choosing a reusable bag?

The ideal reusable bag is made from sustainable materials, is durable and is easily recycled or repurposed.

Are there requirements for paper bags?

Yes. According to the Bylaw’s definition, a paper bag must be made out of paper and contain at least 40% of post-consumer recycled paper content. Paper bags must also display the words “Recyclable” and “made from 40% post-consumer recycled content” (or other applicable amount) on the outside of the bag.

These requirements do not apply to paper bags smaller than 15 centimetres by 20 centimetres when flat.

Are businesses required to charge for fee for all paper bags?

No, paper bags less than 15 x 20 cm do not require a charge.

Does the District know of suppliers for paper bags that meet the bylaw requirements?

The following is a list of suppliers or distributors who have indicated that they can provide businesses with paper checkout bags that meet the bylaw requirements. Businesses should confirm that the bags they order will meet the requirements. This list is not exhaustive.

Enterprise Paper	Tina Rose	778-584-5634	trose@enterprisepaper.com
Kenway Solutions	Boyd Fletcher	778-986-7845	bfletcher@kenwaysolutions.com
Matthews Store Fixtures & Shelving	Jennifer Bowles	250-388-4123	jennifer@matthewsdisplay.com
SimcoPak Inc.	Stephen Simco	514-562-8810	info@simcopak.com
Sysco	Randy Bell	250-475-5771	Bell.Randy@vic.sysco.com

Are biodegradable bags allowed?

No. Biodegradable bags contaminate existing recycling streams and don't adequately decompose in a landfill.

Can a business give paper or reusable bags as gifts?

In accordance with the bylaw, bags cannot be given away for free. Businesses should also ensure that the costs of the bags are included on the bill.

Can businesses have a bag drop program and offer used bags to customers? Can incentives be offered to encourage customers to return bags for reuse? Would fees apply?

Businesses can give a used bag to a customer as long as the bag meets the requirements of the bylaw for paper or reusable bags. Used plastic bags cannot be provided. Fees do not have to be charged for used bags.

This means that businesses can develop programs to take back surplus bags and offer these used bags to customers for no charge. Businesses can offer prizes for people who donate used bags or provide a credit to customers when they return a bag. Creative solutions like these that support the reuse of bags are encouraged.

Are there alternative strategies to using paper bags for protecting multiple breakable items (such as wine bottles) packed together in a reusable bag? Would the charge for paper bags have to be applied in this scenario?

In accordance with the bylaw, the fee for paper bags must be charged, even if the paper bags are used to protect breakable items in a reusable bag. Businesses are encouraged to explore options for reusable bags or inserts that are designed to package breakable items, and to share their findings with other members of the business community.

Do businesses need to charge tax on the fees for reusable and paper bags? Can the required fees be inclusive of taxes?

The bylaw requires that businesses charge a minimum fee for paper or reusable bags. In terms of the bylaw requirements, the minimum fees can be inclusive of taxes. The District of Saanich does not provide guidance on sales tax, however businesses can contact the provincial government on this topic as follows:

BC Taxpayer Services 1-877-388-4440
CTBTaxQuestions@gov.bc.ca

For questions about the GST, please refer to:

Government of Canada 1-800-959-5525

Business Inquiries related to GST: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/gst-hst-businesses/charge-gst/charge-gst-hst.html>

What happens if a customer asks for a bag after the sales transaction is completed? Does a fee still need to be charged for the bag?

The fee must still be charged to meet the terms of the bylaw.

Can businesses use up their existing checkout bag stock past the January 1, 2020 bylaw implementation date? Do businesses have to charge a fee for checkout bags when using up existing stock?

No. The bylaw is set to take effect on January 1, 2020, and after this date, businesses are prohibited from giving out plastic bags.

Will businesses be permitted to sell plastic bags sold in packages?

Yes. The Bylaw does not restrict the sale of bags intended for use at the customer's home or business (garbage bin liners, sandwich bags, compost liners, etc.).

Are there permitted uses under the bylaw for paper and plastic bags?

Plastic bags, or any type of paper bag, are permitted under the bylaw if specifically used for one of the following purposes. Fees do not have to be charged for bags used for these purposes.

- Packaging loose bulk items (e.g. fruit, vegetables, nuts, grain or candy)
- Packaging loose small hardware items (e.g. nails and bolts)
- Containing or wrapping frozen foods, meat, poultry or fish – whether pre-packaged or not
- Wrapping flowers or potted plants
- Protecting prepared foods or bakery goods that are not pre-packaged
- Containing prescription drugs received from a pharmacy
- Transporting live fish
- Protecting linens, bedding or other similar large items that cannot fit easily in a reusable bag
- Protecting newspapers or other printed material intended to be left at the customer's residence or place of business
- Protecting clothes after professional laundering or dry cleaning

What type of bag can businesses use for large items that cannot easily fit in a standard reusable bag?

Single-use plastic bags are permitted under the bylaw for this purpose.

How did the District determine the fees for bags?

The District adopted the fees piloted by the City of Victoria. The City set fees to reflect the actual cost of producing a paper bag and reusable bag.

Who gets to keep the funds collected?

The fee will be charged and collected by individual businesses. These fees will help businesses recover the cost of bags, while also decreasing demand for single-use checkout bags.

How will the bylaw be enforced?

The City will begin administering fines in July 2020, if required. The Bylaw states that an individual can be fined between \$50 and \$500, while a corporation can be fined between \$100 and \$10,000 dollars. These amounts are consistent with other District bylaws. The District would always intend to provide education, guidance, and warnings before any financial penalty, wherever possible.