

CHECKOUT BAG BYLAW

Business FAQs



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

All businesses operating within the Township of Esquimalt.

What kind of bags are we allowed to give out?

The only bags that retailers can give away are small paper bags less than 15 by 20 centimeters in size. Retailers can also supply a customer with paper bags and reusable bags as long as they charge the customer for the bag. Starting on August 16, 2021, the price for a paper bag must be at least 15 cents and the price for a reusable bag must be at least \$1 (these fees can include taxes).

After 6 months, on February 16, 2022, the minimum price will be increased to 25 cents for a paper bag and \$2 for a reusable bag.

For consistency, these fees are identical to those that are charged in the City and will be charged in Saanich. Businesses should ensure that the costs of the bags are included on the bill.

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, cotton or recycled cotton and other natural fabrics such as hemp or jute.

Biodegradable bags are not permitted under the bylaw as the CRD’s composting facility is not designed to breakdown these bags and they contaminate the composting stream.

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

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.

The following is a list of suppliers or distributors who have indicated that they can provide businesses with paper

Enterprise Paper	Tina Rose	778-584-5634	trose@enterprisepaper.com
Kenway Solutions	Boyd Fletcher	778-986-7845	bfletcher@kenwaysolutions.com
SimcoPak Inc.	Stephen Simco	514-562-8810	info@simcopak.com
Sysco	Randy Bell	250-475-5771	Bell.Randy@vic.sysco.com

checkout bags that meet the bylaw requirements. Businesses should confirm that the bags they order will meet the requirements. This list is not exhaustive.

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.

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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.

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 exemptions 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
- 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

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 bylaw contains provisions to fine businesses for non-compliance but the Township would always begin enforcement with education, guidance, and warnings before any financial penalty wherever possible.

Why is reducing the amount of single-use checkout bags important?

- Esquimalt residents use approximately 200 bags each every year, which equates to 3.4 million plastic bags.
- Plastic bags are a common, single-use item which contribute to landfill garbage, litter on our streets, damage to infrastructure, pollution in waterways and the ocean, and contamination of other recycling streams such as paper and kitchen scraps.
- Paper bags also have an environmental impact, primarily in the manufacturing process. For this reason, the bylaw also seeks to reduce the switch from plastic to paper bags by requiring that a fee be charged for each single-use paper bag that is distributed by businesses.

More information at
[Esquimalt.ca/Bags](https://www.esquimalt.ca/Bags)