



Jennifer Wyness, Ward 2 Councillor

Single-Use Items Bylaw

What did Council vote on, and what was my vote?

At our [October 4, 2022 meeting \(Item 7.10\)](#), Council approved the Single-Use Items Reduction Strategy and directed Administration to bring the Single-Use Items Reduction Bylaw back to Council in early 2023.

I voted **against** this direction (read my [voting rationale](#)).

The Single-Use Items Charter Bylaw came back to Council on [January 17, 2023 \(Item 6.2.3\)](#), where it was passed in a 10-4 vote. I voted **against** this Bylaw.

This Bylaw is intended to reduce the number of single-use items (regardless of material) entering Calgary's waste system by requiring all businesses to charge minimum fees for paper and reusable bags, and specifying that customers must request single-use food ware accessories. The Bylaw will come into effect on January 16, 2024, and is separate from the federal [single-use plastics ban](#).

All municipally licensed businesses will have to follow this Bylaw, including restaurants, drive-thrus, and grocery stores. Please see Part 2 of The City's [Business Licence Bylaw 32M98](#) for the full list of impacted businesses.

Why did I vote against?

First, in many ways this Bylaw is premature. It should be called the Single-Use *Compostable* Items Bylaw because it's pre-emptively responding to a possible increase in single-use compostable materials caused by the federal single-use plastics ban. The problem this Bylaw is trying to solve hasn't yet materialized as the federal ban hasn't come into effect yet. We don't fully understand how businesses and consumers will respond to the federal ban.

Second, I believe the mandatory minimum bag fees imposed by the Single-Use Items Bylaw are regressive taxes on consumers and ultimately won't contribute to the City's climate goals.

I have been following the City of Vancouver's implementation of a similar single-use bylaw, and results have shown that the controversial bylaw is already failing due to loopholes, confusing messaging, concerns that the fees collected from the program will be pocketed by businesses who charge them, as well as no enforcement of municipal expectations that the funds would be reinvested into environmentally friendly initiatives. While Calgary's Single-Use Items Bylaw is well-intended, I don't believe charging consumers a minimum fee is necessary nor conducive.

Third, I fully support compostable bags being offered to customers. At the public hearing, Calgary Co-op asked Council to exempt their compostable, plastic-like bags from the Single-Use Items Bylaw. These bags were approved by The City's Waste and Recycling Services and contain no plastic. The resin used to make this type of bag is a co-polymer that contains a biodegradable polymer, and polylactic acid (PLA), a plastic substitute made from fermented corn starch. The ink on the bag is vegetable based.

Now that the Bylaw has been passed, Co-op will only be allowed to offer the bags until January 2024, however, as the [Bylaw \(Section 3\(1\)\)](#) states that:

3. (1) A *business* must not provide or permit to be provided a new *shopping bag* to a customer unless the *shopping bag* is:
 - (a) *paper shopping bag* containing at least 40% recycled content as indicated in print on the bag; or
 - (b) a *reusable shopping bag*.

Compostable bags like Calgary Co-op's are also currently included under the federal ban, an example of unnecessary duplication across orders of government. Calgary Co-op informed Council that they are having ongoing conversations with the federal government about a potential exemption. As well, Administration informed Council they have expressed their support for these compostable bags to the federal government.

Please stay tuned to my website for any further updates.



Jennifer Wyness