Edmonton's Plan to Reduce Single-use Items

Why is there a single-use item reduction strategy?

The City of Edmonton is developing a single-use item reduction strategy to help Edmontonians and organizations operating in Edmonton reduce their reliance on single-use items. This means fewer single-use items will be discarded as litter or thrown in the garbage, moving us closer to our goal of diverting 90 per cent of waste from the landfill.

What are single-use items?

The City's work addresses a number of single-use items (SUI) that are commonly provided for convenience to be used once then discarded, including shopping bags, straws, utensils, disposable cups, and takeout containers. An estimated 450 million SUI are thrown in the garbage every year in Edmonton, and more are thrown in the recycling. That is equivalent to 1.2 million items every day!

Single-use items are made from a range of materials including conventional plastics, alternative plastics that may be compostable or biodegradable, wood, paper, and other fibre products.

Each year Edmontonians throw out...

- 91 million disposable cups*
- 92 million shopping bags*
- 119 million utensils*
- 105 million takeout containers*
- 39 million straws*

* estimated disposed of annually in Edmonton
**Why does this matter?**

There are environmental, social, and economic impacts from the production, consumption, and disposal of SUI, such as greenhouse gas emissions, consumption of natural resources, and water pollution. SUI are also frequently littered, and when released into the environment they are unsightly, damage habitat, and harm wildlife. In Edmonton, the [2019 Litter Audit Report](#) found that 42 per cent of all large litter items were related to single-use items. The most littered single-use items found in the 2019 audit were napkins, cups, and straws.

Edmontonians have told us that reducing SUI is important. During public engagement, we heard that residents and businesses largely support a ban on plastic shopping bags, eliminating plastic straws, and banning styrofoam cups and containers. Furthermore, 81 per cent of residents who engaged want to use fewer disposable cups.

**What does the City want to do?**

The City is developing a strategy to reduce the use of SUI. In alignment with the Zero Waste Framework that is the foundation of the City’s [25-year Waste Strategy](#), the City’s aim is to reduce all single-use items rather than simply replace one type of single-use item with another. Encouraging the transition to reusable items, and reducing the overall reliance on single-use items, will ensure that the strategy has a meaningful impact on our progress toward Edmonton’s zero waste future.
What is being proposed?
The current draft recommendations include regulatory measures for shopping bags, straws, utensils, disposable cups, and cups and containers made of styrofoam. The recommendations are summarized on the right side of this page.

If fees are charged, businesses will keep the revenue and are encouraged to use it to cover the costs of complying with the new bylaw, e.g., purchasing reusable dishes, dishwashers, staff training, etc. Registered not-for-profits will not be required to charge fees on single-use items used to provide charitable food services.

If approved, how will the proposed bylaw be enforced?
The proposed approach to enforcement will be included in the strategy that is presented to Utility Committee. The City intends to prioritize outreach and education throughout program rollout and will provide continued education, outreach and support to help businesses move towards and achieve compliance when the bylaw becomes effective. Enforcement of bylaw provisions in cases of non-compliance will be consistent with Council direction and the City’s policies and procedures.

Proposed Regulations

Shopping bags
Plastic shopping bags banned.
$0.15 minimum mandatory fee for paper bags and $1 minimum mandatory fee for reusable bags.

Cups
$0.25 minimum mandatory fee for disposable cups.
Vendors encouraged to provide reusable cups and accept customer-supplied reusable cups.

Utensils
May be provided only to customers who want them (on request or at a self-serve station).

Straws
Plastic straws banned.
Flexible, individually wrapped plastic straws are an exception, and may be provided on request to address the needs of people who need them to safely consume beverages and nutrition.

Styrofoam
Styrofoam cups and containers banned, including plates, cups, bowls, trays, cartons and hinged (“clamshell”) or lidded containers.
Foam trays used to package uncooked food are not impacted.

Proposed Voluntary Measures

Accessories
(e.g., cup sleeves, stir sticks, paper straws, napkins and single-serving condiment packages.)
Vendors encouraged to provide accessories only to customers who want them.

Dishes and containers
Vendors encouraged to use reusable service ware and accept customer-provided containers.
What are the next steps?
The City of Edmonton is talking to businesses, event organizers, charitable food service providers, and other organizations about the draft recommendations and how the City can support their transition to using fewer SUI. A strategy will be presented to Utility Committee in Q1 2022, and a bylaw will be discussed at a public hearing later in 2022. If the bylaw is adopted, the City will build awareness among impacted organizations and support businesses in becoming compliant. The bylaw will be in effect one year after it is adopted to give businesses and residents time to transition.

It’s important to note that the City will work closely with not-for-profits to minimize impacts on their operations, and is recommending regulations that accommodate people who need single-use items for accessibility reasons.

Who can I contact for more information?
For more information, please visit edmonton.ca/wastereduction or call 311.

Q4 2021
Talking to businesses, charitable food service providers and other organizations about how the City can support their transition to using fewer SUI.

Q1 2022
Recommendations presented to Utility Committee. If approved, the regulatory measures will be developed into a dedicated bylaw.

Q2–3 2022
Residents and businesses will have the opportunity to speak at a public hearing before the bylaw is approved.

Q3 2022
Target date for bylaw approval.

2022 – 2023
Deliver business and consumers awareness campaigns and business support programs.

2023
Target date for bylaw implementation.