

Reducing Single-use Items

Best Practices for Community Programs and Events

Edmonton's Single-use Item Reduction Bylaw helps reduce waste by targeting items that can easily be replaced with reusable options or avoided altogether.

Charities and community organizations must not use plastic shopping bags and foam plates, cups and containers (in alignment with Canada's Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations), but they are exempt from other parts of the bylaw.

Charities and community organizations can make a positive impact on the environment and, often, save money by taking further steps to reduce waste at events. Learn more about bylaw requirements at edmonton.ca/SingleUse.

This guide applies to the following types of organizations and events:

- Charities
- Community leagues
- Community organizations: cultural associations, religious organizations, clubs, etc.
- Volunteer events
- Neighbourhood gatherings like block parties and play streets

Reasons to reduce

- An estimated 450 million single-use items are thrown in the garbage each year in Edmonton, plus more that are recycled and littered.
- Single-use items are often littered. Reducing the amount of single-use items you use can help keep the community cleaner, and protect wildlife and the environment.
- Single-use items are energy intensive. Cutting back can help reduce the emissions created by making, shipping and disposing of these items.
- Switching to reusables may help save money.



When working with vendors

If a community league, charity or community organization is hosting an event, they do not need to comply with most parts of the bylaw.

However,

- *If it is a large event with 1,500+ attendees and the organizer holds a City permit, different rules will apply.*
- *If an organization hires a service provider with a business licence (e.g., a food truck), that provider would need to comply with the bylaw.*

Check out the Event Decision Chart for more information about how the bylaw applies to events.



Some alternatives to single-use items



PLASTIC, PAPER AND FOAM PLATES AND CUPS

Alternatives:

- Glass, metal, ceramic, wood/bamboo and reusable plastic plates and cups

Things you'll need:

- Sinks or dishwashers to wash and sanitize
- Space to store reusables



FOODWARE ACCESSORIES

(e.g., condiment packets, disposable utensils, paper napkins, straws)

Alternatives:

- Condiments in bottles, rather than single-use packages
- Metal cutlery and straws (or avoid using straws altogether)
- Cloth napkins, rather than single-use napkins

Things you'll need:

- Sinks, dishwashers or washing machines to wash and sanitize
- Space to store reusables



Reducing food waste is the number one thing you can do to help combat climate change.

- **Food storage:** While plastic wrap and aluminum foil aren't restricted by the bylaw or federal regulations, we suggest using reusable alternatives like beeswax wraps, reusable food covers and glass food storage containers to store food.
- **Food waste:** Only order or prepare as much food as you think you'll need. Freeze or donate leftovers, or give food to attendees to take home.

If you are unable to store and sanitize reusables, you can still encourage everyone to bring their own clean, undamaged reusable containers, cutlery, cups, plates and bowls.

But be sure to follow [Alberta Health Services' guidelines for the safe use of reusables](#).



Preparing to reuse



BEFORE USING REUSABLE ITEMS, ASK YOURSELF:

- How many attendees am I expecting?
How many of each item do I need?
- Can I rent these items instead of buying (see the [Food Serviceware Supplier List](#))?
How does the cost compare?
- Is there a risk these items could be lost, broken or damaged?
- Can I buy these items locally?
- Are there any public health restrictions in place that might prevent me from using reusables?
- Am I able to safely handle reusable items per [Alberta Health Services' best practices](#)?
- Where will I store these items before/after my event?
- Where and how will I wash and sanitize these items?
- How will I transport the items to the event?
- Can I ask for help from attendees or members of my organization?

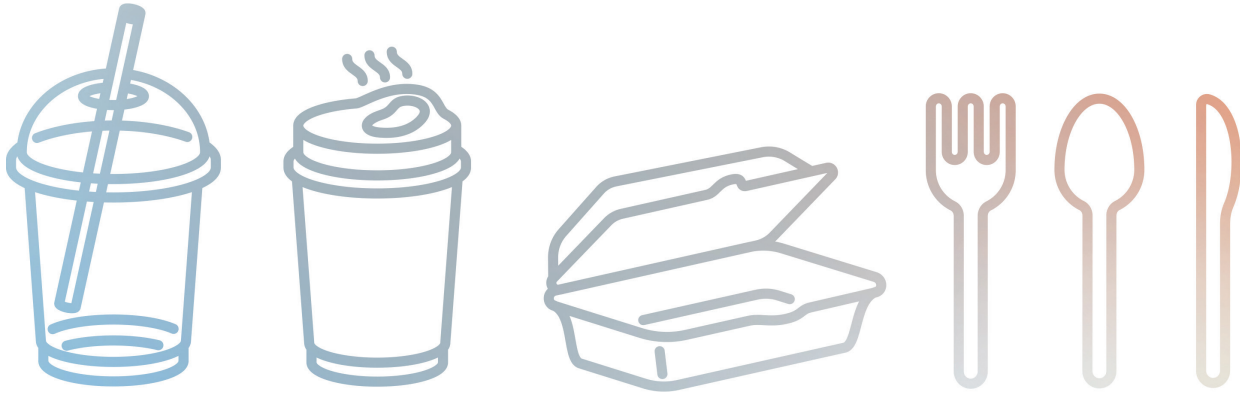
Just do your best!

Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable cups, plates and cutlery!

Sometimes using single-use items might be unavoidable. But you can still reduce the amount you need.

BEFORE USING SINGLE-USE ITEMS, ASK YOURSELF:

- How much do these items cost? Will I save money in the long run by using reusables?
- Is this item necessary?
- Is there a recyclable option I can use? (see the [Sustainable Foodware Guide](#))
- How many of each item do I need? Can I reduce the amount I buy?
- Are there other ways for me to reduce waste at my event (e.g., reusing bags or boxes)?



At some events, it might be difficult to use reusable items safely. If you do need to use single-use items, try to choose recyclable options:

- Cardboard
- Aluminum containers
- Recyclable plastics



If you choose items labelled as compostable, check with your waste collection company to ensure they can be properly processed. They don't break down in most industrial composting facilities, and can generate greenhouse gases in landfills.

Be WasteWise

Ensure you are correctly sorting and disposing of your single-use items by using the WasteWise app.



Find more resources at edmonton.ca/SingleUse

Canada

Government of Canada Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations

Federal regulations on single-use plastics, which ban the sale of six kinds of single-use plastic, apply to all organizations.

As of December 20, 2023, six types of single-use plastics can no longer be distributed:

- Checkout bags
- Ring carriers
- Cutlery
- Stir sticks
- Foodservice ware
- Straws

Learn more here!

