

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about:



MMBC Recycling Program Changes to Curbside Collection Recycling

What is MMBC?

Multi-Material BC (MMBC) is a non-profit organization that is responsible for residential recycling programs in many areas across BC. MMBC provides this service through partnerships with local governments, First Nations, private companies and non-profit organizations. The MMBC program is funded by the businesses that supply packaging and printed paper to BC residents, shifting recycling costs away from municipalities.

Why did the City join the MMBC program?

This province wide recycling program was already in place and being funded by industry. By joining the program, there was no increased cost to the City and the City will receive program revenues of close to \$1 million on an annual basis.

This means our recycling services are now funded by producers that supply packaging and printed paper instead of through our residents' user fees.

The revenue will provide additional opportunities to the solid waste program and will help to keep user fees low for our garbage and compostable waste collection. Also, by participating in the provincial program, the onus is placed back on industry to make more environmentally conscious packaging.

One of the main goals of MMBC is to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills. MMBC charges fees to producers of packaging and printed paper, and uses this revenue to fund residential recycling programs. The fees are determined by the size of packaging, so producers who create less packaging pay less. As a result, there is incentive for industry to reduce packaging waste by thinking innovatively about their packaging choices.

The program impact can be seen by looking at changes in consumer packaging over the last several years. For example, when USB sticks were first sold, they were a small item in large, oversized plastic packaging. Now the packaging is half the size.

Will fees be going down as a result of these changes?

No changes to the solid waste fees are being considered in the immediate term. The City is currently conducting a solid waste master plan, which will review current operations and consider options for changes and enhancements to the program and services being delivered. The process will also include a review of the City's solid waste fees.

How does this program change recycling service?

The MMBC program is expected to result in more material being recycled overall, helping the City to achieve its diversion goals. Residents will also have an expanded list of products that can be recycled, either through the curbside program or at a drop-off depot.

Which other municipalities have joined the MMBC program?

Over 75 local governments and First Nations have joined the MMBC curbside program since it began operating in 2014, and the District of Mission and City of Chilliwack are also joining MMBC in 2017.

Will there be changes to the list of materials that are accepted in the curbside collection program?

Yes. Glass and film plastic (shopping bags, bread bags and other plastic overwrap) will no longer be accepted in the curbside blue bags, but can be dropped off at an MMBC recycling depot. Plastic bags can also be dropped off at local retailers that accept these materials for recycling. New materials that will be collected in the blue bags include coffee cups and lids, paper bags for items like flour, sugar and pet food, and an expanded list of plastic containers.

Isn't this a step backwards, because you are removing items from our collection?

We are asking residents to take two items to the depot; glass and film plastic. We will now be collecting a variety of new materials in our curbside program, including most plastic packaging, garden trays and pots, paper coffee cups and plastic lids, plastic take-out drink cups, paper egg cartons and take-out trays, empty coffee pods, paper gift wrap and paper bags for items like flour, sugar and pet food. Some of these items were going into the garbage in our community before. In addition, Styrofoam™ can be dropped off at a depot for recycling.

We understand this is a new process and a change for residents. The MMBC curbside program is in place in over 75 municipalities in BC, and many more participate through depot programs. Other communities have successfully joined the program and we believe this is a better investment for our community. Not only are we joining a recycling program that is already in place and paid for by industry, MMBC is able to ensure all the material they collect is recycled, which means more material is recycled overall.

Why won't glass be accepted in the blue bag?

Glass breaks easily during collection and sorting. When it breaks and is collected in the same container as other packaging or printed paper, the shards of glass can get embedded in and mixed with the other recyclables and cannot be separated again. This leads to less glass and other blue bag materials being recycled.

Why can't we put glass in a separate box for collection?

Abbotsford cannot pick up glass containers at the curb and meet MMBC specifications. The City currently operates on a single stream pick up service, where all recyclables go into one bag and are picked up and put into a truck that has one bin. When mixed with other recyclables, glass often breaks and contaminates other material in the bag. MMBC will not accept glass collected in a single stream system because of this contamination.

The majority of communities that collect glass use a multi-stream collection model and material is separated/sorted before it goes to the curb. This material is picked up by trucks that have different compartments for different materials.

Some communities also have a smaller service area, and therefore have more options for cost-effectively collecting glass. Due to our large geographical area and over 26,000 households that receive curbside collection, these options are not available for Abbotsford. Right now, it is not cost effective for Abbotsford to collect glass at the curb.

Other larger communities such as Chilliwack, Surrey, New Westminster and Kamloops also do not provide separate curbside glass collection.

Won't this mean more glass going into the garbage?

We are hopeful that residents' care for the environment and the City will encourage them to recycle this material at a depot. Glass makes up about 7% of all recycling materials, by weight. Most packaging is made from paper and plastic that is accepted in the curbside program. As the onus goes back to industry to pay for the recycling of packaging, it is envisioned that the trend to use glass packaging will decrease. Several of our local recycling depots will take non-refundable bottles and jars at the same place as refundable beverage containers, so residents can take them all at the same time.

Why won't film plastics be accepted in the blue bag?

Film plastics (shopping bags and plastic overwrap) mix with other recyclables during collection, are difficult to separate and get caught up in the processing equipment. This leads to less film plastics and other materials being recycled. When plastic film is returned to the depot, staff can ensure material is empty, clean and dry and only the correct types of soft plastic are included. This ensures North American recycling remanufacturers' specifications are met so that these materials can be recycled in BC or North America, and not sent overseas.

How do I recycle glass and film plastic?

Glass and film plastic can be taken to an MMBC depot for recycling. Depots are listed on the MMBC website at www.recyclinginbc.ca and at www.abbotsford.ca/collection. Many local retailers will also take plastic bags for recycling.

Where are the depots?

Abbotsford Bottle Depot: 33236 Walsh Avenue, Abbotsford

Abbotsford Mission Recycling Depot (AMRD): 33670 Valley Rd, Abbotsford

Aldergrove Return-It Depot: 27482 Fraser Highway, Aldergrove

R&T Recyclables & Bottle Depot: Unit 23 31550 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford

Why could we recycle glass and film plastic before?

MMBC is a province-wide program and needs to be consistent across the province to ensure maximum collection. The larger scale of the program requires certainty of markets and therefore must address market concerns with glass and film plastic, while at the same time, providing economies of scale for accepting additional materials.

What happens with baggies, zipper lock type bags and Saran™ type wrap?

Sandwich wrap, like Saran™ wrap, and zipper lock bags and baggies are not accepted in curbside collection or at MMBC recycling depots. These contain multiple layers of plastics and/or different types of plastics and are incompatible with the MMBC recycling process. The best option is to limit the use of these materials.

What new material will be accepted in the curbside collection program?

An expanded list of plastic including most plastic packaging, garden trays and pots, paper coffee cups and plastic lids, plastic take-out drink cups, paper egg cartons and take-out trays, empty coffee pods, paper gift wrap, empty aerosol containers and paper bags for flour, sugar and pet food will now be accepted in the blue bags.

What new material will be accepted at the depots?

Residents can now bring foam packaging (Styrofoam™, expanded polystyrene) to an MMBC recycling depot. This includes clean foam food containers and trays (meat trays, egg cartons, cups, etc.) and foam cushion packaging (from electronics, small appliances, etc.). Residents can also drop off any items accepted in the curbside recycling program, but the material must be sorted into the appropriate bins at the depot.

When will the changes begin?

Changes to the collection program will begin on April 3, 2017.

Is my collection day the same?

Yes. Your collection day will remain the same. The 2017 curbside calendar that was mailed to your home in mid-December is still in effect.

Are the material collection limits the same?

Yes. Residents can put out unlimited recycling blue bags, up to 10 containers of compostable waste weekly, and 3 containers of garbage bi-weekly.

If I have glass or film plastic in my blue bag will my blue bag be collected?

Blue bags containing glass or film plastics will be collected in April and the City will leave a reminder notice. As of May 1, blue bags containing glass or film plastic will no longer be collected.

Does the MMBC program apply to residents in multi-family homes?

The changes to recycling apply to households that receive City curbside collection services. The City does not provide solid waste collection services to multi-family properties (townhouses, condominiums, apartments and bare land stratas), however, some multi-family properties may also have to follow the new requirements due to processing changes at the Abbotsford Mission Recycling Depot (AMRD). The AMRD will be changing its sorting process beginning April 3, 2017, and will no longer accept glass and film plastics in loads from private collectors. Multi-family properties whose collection contractors bring their recyclables to the AMRD will be required to follow these new requirements and separate glass and film plastics. Letters regarding the AMRD changes were sent to strata councils, property managers and private collection providers. Residents living in multi-family properties and are encouraged to contact their strata council about about participation in the MMBC program and changes to their collection service.

Is there any way Council will change their mind on this program?

No, the city has signed a legally binding agreement. Staff is updating the solid waste master plan this year, which will review current services and processes and suggest ways to keep services cost effective and efficient. If residents have ideas for service improvements they are welcome to send them in for consideration to eng-info@abbotsford.ca. The MMBC program provides residents with recycling options for an expanded list of materials, and we trust that residents will do their part in diverting materials from landfills and keeping our City clean and green.

Where can I get more information?

The City's website at www.abbotsford.ca/collection as well as Multi-Material BC's website at www.recyclinginbc.ca. Residents can also find out where to dispose of material by using the Waste Wizard, available at www.abbotsford.ca/wastewizard, or by downloading the free CurbCollect smart phone app.