

# Single-use Item Reduction Bylaw Guide

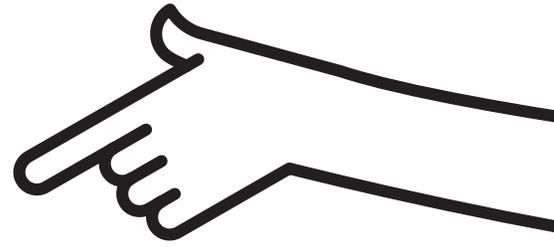
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**Charter Bylaw 20117**

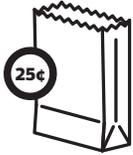
Updated May 2024



# Bylaw Summary:



- Single-use plastic shopping bags can no longer be distributed.



- Businesses must charge at least 25¢ for paper shopping bags.



- Businesses must charge at least \$2 for new reusable shopping bags.



- Foam plates, cups, bowls, containers, etc. can no longer be used.



- Businesses may only provide disposable foodware accessories of any material upon request or by self-serve (e.g., straws, cutlery, condiments, napkins).



- Businesses are expected to serve dine-in drinks in reusable cups.



- Businesses must develop and follow a policy for accepting reusable customer cups.

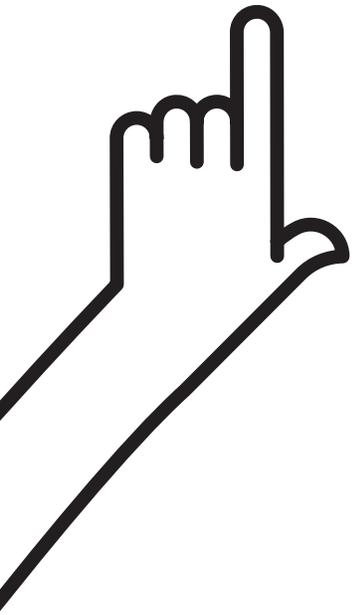


# Charter Bylaw 20117: Single-use Item Reduction

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Bylaw 20117 helps reduce waste by targeting items that can easily be replaced with reusable options or avoided altogether.

This means fewer disposable items are thrown in the garbage or littered, leading to a cleaner, more sustainable Edmonton.



## Affected organizations

Bylaw 20117 applies to most organizations that are required to hold a business licence or civic event permit (for 1,500+ attendees) issued by the City of Edmonton.

The type of business licence categories an organization is licenced under (as defined in the [Business Licence Bylaw](#)) will determine which requirements apply. See the chart on page 5 for details.

## Bylaw exemptions

Registered charities and some facilities that do not require a business licence (such as hospitals, long-term care facilities and schools) are exempt from Edmonton's Single-use Item Reduction Bylaw (20117).

However, Canada's Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations override some municipal exemptions.

Other types of organizations are currently exempt from certain bylaw requirements, but may be required to comply in the future. For a complete list, visit [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse).



## Support for businesses

Visit [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse) for more information about Bylaw 20117 and available support, including free printable posters and other resources. Some resources are available in additional languages.

*311 service is available in over 100 languages.  
Please call 311 and request interpretation  
in your preferred language.*



## Why should we reduce single-use items in Edmonton?

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- Edmontonians throw out 450 million single-use items every year.
- Most end up in the landfill, and others are littered, harming wildlife and the environment and making public spaces less enjoyable. Few are recycled.
- Bylaw 20117 reduces items that are often littered, hard to recycle, and have readily-available alternatives.
- Producing, shipping and disposing of these items consumes resources and produces emissions contributing to climate change.

Research has shown that the cost of switching to reusable cups, dishes and cutlery (including the cost of the items themselves, a dishwasher and additional labour costs) is almost always quickly offset by the savings on waste disposal and not buying single-use foodware.



## Bylaw at-a-glance

Find out which bylaw requirements apply to your organization, and which pages of this guide you should review.



Items	Bylaw requirements	Does this apply to most business licence holders? <i>(food/beverage service and retail, with some exemptions listed at <a href="http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse">edmonton.ca/SingleUse</a>)</i>	Does this apply to events? (1,500+ attendees)	Does this apply to farmers' or public markets?
Bags Page 7	Single-use plastic shopping bags can no longer be distributed.	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
	Businesses must charge at least 25¢ for paper shopping bags.  Businesses must charge at least \$2 for new reusable shopping bags.	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
Accessories Page 8	Businesses must not provide any single-use foodware accessory to a customer unless the customer requests it. (Self-serve accessory stations can be provided.)	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Foam Page 8	Polystyrene foam ("Styrofoam") plates, cups, bowls, containers, etc. can no longer be used.	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Cups Page 9	Businesses are expected to serve dine-in drinks in reusable cups.	✓ Yes <i>(applies to holders of restaurant and food service business licences only, with some exemptions, like food courts, food trucks, and spectator entertainment venues)</i>	✗ No	✗ No
	Businesses must develop and follow a policy that describes how they will accept reusable customer cups.	✓ Yes <i>(applies to holders of restaurant and food service business licences only, with some exemptions like spectator entertainment venues)</i>	✓ Yes	✓ Yes

## Informing and accommodating customers

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The City will work to inform and educate residents about this change before they enter your business, but there are a few things you and your staff can do to help ensure customer needs are met while complying with the bylaw:



- **Encourage your staff to refer customers who have questions to [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](https://edmonton.ca/SingleUse)**, rather than debating with them.



- **Use the City-branded customer information tools provided at [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](https://edmonton.ca/SingleUse)**, rather than making your own. This will help communicate that this change is City-mandated.



- **Let customers be creative with alternatives to single-use bags.** Allow them to transport their purchases in backpacks, bins, carts, wagons, storage containers, etc.



- **When you receive shipments in cardboard boxes, bring the boxes to the front of the store for customers to use instead of bags.** This gives the cardboard a second life and saves the customer the fee for a paper or reusable bag.



- **Set up a “take a bag, leave a bag” station near the front of your store.**





# Shopping bags

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



### **Plastic shopping bags can no longer be distributed.**

This includes shopping bags made from biodegradable and/or compostable plastics.



### **A fee of at least 25¢ (as of July 1, 2024) must be charged for all new paper shopping bags.**

Paper bags must contain at least 40% recycled materials, and this percentage must be printed on the bag.

Bags used to package food takeout or delivery orders are considered shopping bags and a fee must be charged.



### **A fee of at least \$2 (as of July 1, 2024) must be charged for all new reusable shopping bags.**

Fees on paper and new reusable bags will be kept by the businesses and serve two purposes:

- To help offset the cost to businesses of buying the bags
- To encourage customers to bring their own reusable bags, backpacks, and other containers

### **Bylaw requirements do not apply to bags used to:**

- \* Package bulk items such as hardware or fasteners
- \* Serve as primary packaging for food items including baked goods, produce or bulk food items
- \* Package goods from a pharmacist
- \* Protect non-food items from becoming dirty or unusable (e.g., dry cleaning bags)

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Ensure bag fees show as a separate line item on any receipts provided to customers by using wording such as "PAPER BAG" and "REUSABLE BAG."
- Set up a "take a bag, leave a bag" station in your store, so customers can share excess reusable bags with customers who need them.
- Train your staff/cashiers to ask customers if they brought their own bag, or if they need a paper or reusable shopping bag before providing one.
- Use the printable posters and till toppers at [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](https://edmonton.ca/SingleUse) to help inform customers and remind them to bring their reusable bags.



# Accessories



*"Accessories" includes items like utensils, straws, stir sticks, napkins, condiment packets, cocktail sticks and toothpicks.*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Accessories can only be provided if the customer wants them. The business can ask, the customer can ask, or a self-serve station can be provided.**

Only the accessories requested can be provided (no "bundling").

All accessories are subject to the bylaw, regardless of what they are made from (plastic, wood, paper, etc.).

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Update your online and mobile point-of-sale systems to give customers a way to request accessories.
- Consider setting up a self-serve accessory station.
- Train your staff not to add accessories to orders unless they are requested.
- Use the printable posters and till toppers at [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](https://edmonton.ca/SingleUse) to inform customers.



# Foam



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Polystyrene foam ("Styrofoam") cups, plates, bowls and containers can no longer be used as of July 1, 2023.**

Foam trays or containers can still be used to contain uncooked foods including meat and eggs.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Speak with your supplier about alternatives to foam. Try to use reusable or locally recyclable containers. (See the Guide on page 10.)



# Cups

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



**Restaurants are expected to provide dine-in drinks in reusable cups/mugs.**

To-go drinks can be provided in single-use cups.

Food courts and food trucks are not required to provide reusable cups, as they do not have on-site dining.



**Businesses must have a written policy that describes how they will accept reusable customer cups.**

Businesses are not required to accept customer cups that are dirty, broken, or otherwise unsuitable.

Businesses are encouraged to find ways to accept customer cups in drive-thrus and for advance orders, but this is not required by the bylaw.



**Certain types of businesses that combine a food service business licence with another type of licence (such as spectator entertainment venues) are currently exempt from one or both reusable cup requirements. (See exemptions listed at [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse).)**

These businesses need extra time and support to comply with the bylaw, but will be removed from the exemptions list when the City determines that businesses within a category should be able to comply with the requirements.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Develop a policy for accepting customer cups. Your policy must be in compliance with existing provincial health and safety rules and guidelines, and may include:

- Guidelines for assessing cup cleanliness and if/when to clean or rinse cups
- Guidelines for assessing cup size and steps to ensure customers receive the right drink quantity (e.g., make the drink in one of the restaurant's reusable cups then transfer it to the customer's cup)
- Guidance on handling customer cups (e.g., have the customer keep the lid)
- Steps for entering orders in your point-of-sale system
- Whether or not you offer a discount when a customer brings their own cup

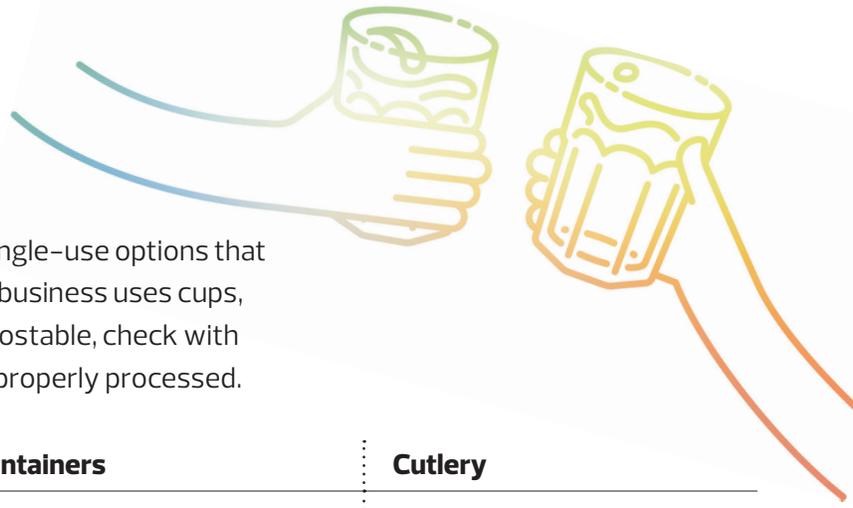
Train your employees on how to handle reusables according to your policy (e.g., wash hands frequently and avoid contact between the customer cup and restaurant's serving equipment).

If your business provides dine-in services, purchase reusable cups made from durable materials that are able to withstand repeated washing, sanitizing and use.

If your facility allows it, consider implementing a system to allow customer cups to be used in the drive-thru (e.g., have customers drop off their cups at one window and pick them up at another).

Use the printable posters and till toppers at [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse) to help inform customers and guide the safe use of reusable cups.

# Choosing Sustainable Cups, Containers and Cutlery



Businesses are encouraged to use reusable items or single-use options that are accepted in Edmonton's recycling program. If your business uses cups, containers or other food serviceware labelled as compostable, check with your waste collection company to ensure they can be properly processed.

	Cups	Containers	Cutlery
<p><b>★</b> <b>Best</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use reusable cups for dine-in</li> <li>Accept clean, reusable cups from customers</li> <li>Participate in a program that provides returnable, reusable travel cups</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use reusables for food to be consumed on-site</li> <li>Accept clean, reusable containers from customers</li> <li>Provide containers that can be reused at home by customers</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use reusables for food to be consumed on-site</li> </ul> 	
<p><b>✓</b> <b>Acceptable</b></p> <p>Look for single-use options that are accepted in Edmonton's recycling and food scraps processing programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recyclable plastic cups</li> </ul> <p><i>Currently, no paper cups are accepted for recycling by the City.</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recyclable plastics</li> <li>Recyclable unlined cardboard and pulp (similar to egg cartons)</li> <li>Recyclable aluminum</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single-use cutlery is acceptable, but its use should be limited (wood, bamboo, plastics other than polystyrene or polyethylene)</li> </ul> 
<p><b>✗</b> <b>Avoid</b></p> <p>Check with your waste collection company to ensure items labelled as compostable can be properly processed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper cups or containers lined with plastic or wax</li> <li>Compostable/biodegradable plastic cups and containers, including paper lined with compostable plastic</li> </ul> 		<p><i>Single-use wooden cutlery can be composted by the City.</i></p> <p><i>If you choose cutlery labelled as compostable, check with your waste collection company to ensure they can be properly processed.</i></p>



For the most current waste sorting information, download the **WasteWise app** or use the tool online at [edmonton.ca/Waste](https://edmonton.ca/Waste)

For a list of local suppliers of alternatives to foam plates, containers, etc., visit [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](https://edmonton.ca/SingleUse)

## Ready to do more?

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Consider developing a policy for accepting customer reusable containers for takeout, similar to your policy for reusable customer cups (see page 9). Your policy may include:

- Requirements for acceptable containers (clean, in good condition and made of a food-safe material like ceramic, metal, glass or durable plastic)
- Guidelines for assessing container cleanliness
- Guidelines for safely serving into customer containers
- Whether or not you offer a discount when a customer brings their own container



# Answers to common questions

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**Can I use my own branded communication items instead of the City's?**

We recommend using the City's printable resources, such as branded posters and till toppers, to show that this is a City-mandated change. Find them at [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse).

But if you prefer, you can use your own information tools. However, you may not use the City's logo on the items you create.

**Do employees need to be able to answer questions about the bylaw and other City programs/bylaws?**

We do not expect your employees to answer specific questions about the bylaw. Instead, we recommend directing customers to [edmonton.ca/SingleUse](http://edmonton.ca/SingleUse) for more information.

**Is it up to me to enforce this?**

It is the responsibility of businesses to comply with the requirements of the bylaw by: not distributing plastic shopping bags; charging the appropriate fees for paper and new reusable bags; not using foam plates, containers, etc.; accepting customers' reusable cups; providing reusable cups for dine-in drinks; and providing accessories by request only.

**Will alternative items cost a lot more money?**

The per-unit price of many alternatives to foam are higher than the price of foam products. It is up to each business to decide whether or not to increase prices.

**Can I increase my prices to recover costs?**

The minimum fees on paper and new reusable bags are designed partly to help offset the cost of these items.

Using reusables for dine-in orders and encouraging customers to bring their own cups and containers for takeout can also help reduce costs. Reusables are the most cost-effective option over time, even when factoring in the up-front costs, and the cost to wash and sanitize.

**Can I use the revenue from paper and reusable bags any way I want?**

Businesses can keep the fees from paper and reusable bags, and are encouraged to use the revenue to cover the cost of paper and reusable bags. You are encouraged to use any net revenue for environmental programs.

**Why aren't requirements consistent in the Edmonton region?**

In 2023, the federal government banned some single-use plastics. The banned items in the City's bylaw are consistent with the federal regulations, which provide some consistency across the country.

We are working towards making waste rules more consistent between municipalities in the Edmonton region, including waste sorting rules and restrictions on single-use items. Currently, each municipality has sorting rules and restrictions in place based on the needs of their waste system, resident demands and waste processor requirements.

**Will the City pay to have the posters and till toppers printed?**

The City will provide printed till toppers for free upon request. Posters are in a print-friendly format to help make it easier for businesses to print as many as they need.

**If public health restrictions are enacted, will this bylaw be waived?**

Bylaw requirements can be waived for public health and public interest reasons.



**Thank you  
for doing your  
part to help  
reduce waste!**

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**[edmonton.ca/SingleUse](https://edmonton.ca/SingleUse)**

Updated May 2024

**Edmonton**