



Nechako **Waste Reduction** Initiative
P.O. Box 1859, Vanderhoof, British Columbia V0J 3A0

May 20, 2014

Allen Langdon
Managing Director, Multi-Material BC (MMBC)
230 – 171 Esplanade West
North Vancouver, BC V7M 3J9

Dear Mr. Langdon,

Re: MMBC and recycling services in Vanderhoof

On behalf of the Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative, a volunteer-driven community organization that promotes recycling and waste reduction in Vanderhoof, I am writing to express our disappointment and concern at the news that there will be no changes in local recycling in Vanderhoof through MMBC this May. We feel like this is profoundly unfair to residents of Vanderhoof and to the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) and undermines MMBC's own stated benefits and responsibilities. We believe that a sustainable industry-led packaging and printed paper (PPP) recycling program is possible in Vanderhoof and hope that this letter will contribute to a constructive dialogue about how to make this happen in the near future.

The Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative has been active in Vanderhoof for over five years and has been working with the RDBN to provide a temporary recycling solution for residents while the new provincial *Recycling Regulation* took effect. In that time, we have received generous support from the RDBN to provide recycling services for cardboard, mixed paper, and mixed household plastics. We had been offering this service over the last few years – and the RDBN had been funding this service – with the understanding that MMBC and the new *Recycling Regulation* would take responsibility for recycling these materials in Vanderhoof in May 2014.

Now, with MMBC stating that there would be no changes in local recycling in Vanderhoof through their programs, residents of Vanderhoof are left with an unfair and uncertain recycling system. The five most significant impacts of this announcement on Vanderhoof residents are:

- 1) Through their consumer purchases, Vanderhoof residents are funding an industry-led recycling program for which they see no benefit.
- 2) Vanderhoof residents are not able to recycle the same packaging products as other B.C. residents and do not have the same level of service as other B.C. residents.
- 3) Because of the RDBN's decision to continue funding our recycling program until the end of the calendar year, Vanderhoof residents (unlike other B.C. residents) are paying their regional government to provide recycling services – something that the new *Recycling Regulation* was supposed to avoid.
- 4) The continuation of recycling in Vanderhoof is entirely dependent on the RDBN's generosity. If the RDBN decides to re-allocate recycling money – money that they were not expecting to be spending on recycling services under the new *Recycling Regulation* and industry-financed recycling in the first place – recycling in Vanderhoof would simply stop and all residential PPP would have to be landfilled.
- 5) Expecting changes to waste management given the new *Recycling Regulation*, the District of Vanderhoof postponed garbage bylaw updates and capital purchases. Continued uncertainty delays these further.

Needless to say, this is not the situation that the Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative or residents of Vanderhoof expected to find themselves in after the announcement of new recycling regulations and the creation of MMBC.

We believe that MMBC's disappointing decision to not support recycling in Vanderhoof clearly undermines the organization's own stated benefits and informational materials. According to MMBC's online materials, when MMBC assumed responsibility for PPP recycling on May 19, 2014:

- 1) "BC residents will be able to recycle more" (i.e. "new categories of packaging"),
- 2) "MMBC... will be reducing the financial burden on local governments and their taxpayers",
- 3) "More materials will be kept out of landfills, which is good for the environment",
- 4) "MMBC will provide for consistent recycling across the province... so that residents can recycle the same PPP materials no matter where they live in BC", and
- 5) "MMBC will work to remove barriers to recycling".

In Vanderhoof, where MMBC has decided not to support recycling, these statements are plainly untrue. In fact, as of May 19, Vanderhoof residents and the RDBN will be seeing an increased financial burden, a growing service gap relative to other B.C. residents, and a recycling system that is under constant threat of stopping altogether.

While we acknowledge that there are challenges involved with recycling in smaller communities, we believe that there are ways for MMBC to offer residents of Vanderhoof the same level of service as residents of other B.C. communities – service that Vanderhoof residents should be entitled to given MMBC's claim to "provide for consistent recycling across the province". Some opportunities include:

- 1) The District of Vanderhoof submitted a proposal for curbside PPP recycling collection in Vanderhoof that was rejected by MMBC. We believe that this proposal reflects the true costs of implementing a curbside recycling collection program in a community like Vanderhoof and could be re-considered by MMBC.
- 2) In 2013, when the Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative and others asked MMBC's Glenda Gies what would happen if no proposals for curbside PPP collection for Vanderhoof were received, we were led to believe that MMBC would start a process to create and operate a depot for PPP recycling. We believe that this option – MMBC financing a depot in Vanderhoof – can still be pursued.
- 3) MMBC could fund the existing level of service in Vanderhoof. The Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative would be happy to provide more details on the cost and nature of that service.

The Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative is supportive of industry-led and funded PPP recycling in B.C. We would, however, like to see this new system applied equitably throughout the province in order to provide residents of Vanderhoof with the level of recycling service that they are entitled to under the new *Recycling Regulation*. We urge MMBC to consider the options above for Vanderhoof in order to provide a long-term, fair, and comprehensive PPP recycling system for residents of Vanderhoof.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the future of recycling in Vanderhoof.

Sincerely,

Vince Terstappen
Sustainability Coordinator, Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative

cc: Gerry Thiessen (District of Vanderhoof), Evan Parliament (District of Vanderhoof), Jerry Petersen (RDBN), Janine Dougall (RDBN), Hon. John Rustad (MLA, Nechako Lakes), Hon. Mary Polak (Minister of Environment), Hon. Christy Clark (Premier)