



1. Do you handle batteries? If not, do you have plans to do so?

*BC does have a battery recycling program. Several of the Return-It depot locations accept batteries, as well as some retailers including London Drugs and The Source. For more information on the recycling of batteries and other materials, you can go to BC Recycles: <https://www.bcrecycles.ca/>*

2. What do you see as Return-It's role with reducing single-use plastics?

*Our primary goal is recycling, but we're conscious that refillables and reusables are an emerging part of the landscape and we're in regular communication with brand owners to help support and facilitate those kinds of initiatives, even if it's starting with pilots.*

3. How can we as individuals increase the recycling of plastics by others through Return-It facilities? Perhaps through our roles in schools, businesses, faith groups, etc.

*Two things:*

1. *Letting as many people as possible know about [Return-It Express](#). Express seems to help bridge the gap of convenience that people perceive. Once people realize that they can recycle their containers in 30 seconds or a minute, that seems to break down that barrier.*
2. *Return-It Express is a great fundraising opportunity for schools, community groups, faith groups and charities. They can sign up for their own Return-It Express account and provide the phone number of their account to all of their stakeholders. People can come down to the Express locations, use that phone number and all of the deposit refunds will go to that group. We already see a lot of Parent Advisory Committees (PAC's), soccer teams, charities, such as the Variety Show of Hearts, using Express. It's widely used and we expect to see more use by groups in the future.*

4. How do you recycle things like Tetra packs?

*Tetra pack material is primarily used in the production of tissue paper or toilet paper. I have actually visited the mills in Korea where they recycle these. They scrape the plastic off from the outsides of the containers and use this for fuel for their processors as they don't have oil or any other natural resource for fuel. The white fiber is actually very valuable. The only unused component is the aluminum lining. I've actually purchased Korean tissue paper that is made from tetra packs. We also have some mills in North America, primarily back east. Most of ours goes to Korea because, from an environmental impact perspective, it is much better to barge this material to Korea than to transport it by train and truck to the mid-west US.*



5. Any chance to add soft plastics and possibly other recyclable stuff to the blue bin so that households start to recycle more and better? not everyone seems to be willing to drive to return stations and it ends then in their general garbage.

*The challenge with soft plastics is the density of the material, so it gets wrapped up in the machinery all through the recycling process and it is often so contaminated that it cannot be sold after the recycling process. If it is collected at a London Drugs or at one of our depots, it is actually a very clean stream and a saleable commodity that can be made into new products. We may figure out a way to collect soft plastics curbside in the future. We have to remember that curbside pick-up was designed for newspaper and cans. We've added so many other things to this system and some work while others are more difficult.*

6. How can we move away from all the single use bottles?

*There's an emerging narrative and movement around reusables. We're waiting to see how this takes shape. The challenge is managing a reusables system in a province as big as British Columbia. I can see the case for reusables in urban centres. A reusables system becomes more challenging as we think about what this means as you move to Quesnel, Prince Rupert, or Salmo. I believe there is a lot of thinking that needs to happen as it's a totally different system and we're talking about re-engineering a supply chain. It's challenging. We continue to dialogue with brand owners around pilots for reusables and refillables.*

Do you see the Pop Shoppe model working for urban centres?

7. Textiles - how do we recycle textiles that are at the end of their life -ie would not be reused - rags!

*Textiles that can no longer be resold or reused will, for the most part, be turned into rags and reused as absorbents in pads to absorb antifreeze, oil and things like that. Through our partnership with Salvation Army, there are select Return-It depots that collect textiles. More information on this program can be found at <https://www.return-it.ca/textiles/>*

8. Do you have any plans to eliminate the single use plastic generated when people bag their return containers for the Return-It Express?

*Currently we're looking at some reasonable options and we plan to pilot an option at one of our location by the end of the year. From there, we will help to implement our*



*plan. Our commitment is to phase out all single-use plastic film within our supply chain by 2025.*

9. How are you dealing with all the plastic being generated from the take away meals

*This is an issue that falls primarily under the Recycle BC program. Two things:*

- 1. The government is making changes to include things like plastic cutlery in the EPR program so businesses will have to pay fees and that material will be collected.*
- 2. Reusable take-out systems and some meal kit programs are now zero waste. There's a zero waste burrito you can now buy in Vancouver, for example. Fresh Prep is a home meal kit program that uses reusable containers that get picked up by the company each week through their pick-up system. In Vancouver there is a lot of work being done on reusables.*

10. Micro-plastics – what are the plans to work on minimizing micro-plastics in the ocean?

*The issue of micro-plastics from Return-It's perspective is two-fold:*

- 1. To reduce the leakage of products into the environment. These plastic products break down into micro-plastics. So we want to ensure that we collect all of the plastics we can and minimize leakage into the environment as much as possible.*
- 2. To close the loop on our materials as much as possible so that the plastics keep being made into new bottles rather than textiles. We know that textiles are a major source of microplastics ending up in the ocean.*

*We just finalized our partnership with the Pacific Salmon Foundation which is focused on eliminating microplastics in our waterways.*

11. Can you outline the trade-off between cleaning and sanitizing reusable cups vs new products?

*That's a very good question. There is a lot of water used to clean reusables. There is a lot of thinking to be done on how we change those supply chains. If you just take washing for example, that's a lot of water and you probably want to find ways to reuse that water. You also have, especially post Covid-19, some incredibly high standards for cleanliness and sanitation because of peoples' legitimate concerns around contracting something from something that has been previously used.*

*Environmentally, reusables is really a local endeavor. One of the challenges with reusables right now is that they're travelling vast distances. You could have some beer bottles travelling from Saskatchewan to the Okanagan to be washed, and then all the way back. The carbon footprint from that nullifies any potential benefit of the system. We need to build local capacity, and that's why this is going to be a long-term project. We know through our work that there is virtually no capacity for washing reusables inside the Lower Mainland, so that's been holding us back here.*



12. How do apartment building recycling systems (e.g. big blue bins separating glass, paper, plastic) relate to the Return-It processes?

*You can put your beverage containers in those bins and they will come back to us through our agreement with Recycle BC. Some stratas have started collecting refundable beverage containers separately and using the funds earned for building funds or social funds.*

13. I noticed that your local Return-It in Tsawwassen keeps a very clean store— do you have regulations governing the appearance of the stores.

*That's great to hear. We've invested a million dollars in upgrading our depots in the last few years, and one of them was Tsawwassen. We do have minimum depot standards. A number of our depots do a really good job maintaining clean facilities, others are still a work in progress. We're very focused going forward on ensuring that we have a welcoming atmosphere for customers – with Return-It Express and the depots.*

14. Could the province adopt financial incentive programs for retailers to switch to paper packaging where practical? The corollary to that is to introduce an environmental packaging tax on plastic containers.

*Not everything that is currently housed in plastic could make the shift to paper, and paper has its' own environmental impacts that we can't totally ignore. A plastic tax has been tried. We do have Extended Producer Responsibility in BC where producers have to pay for recycling – so it's not a tax but a fee. The most likely outcome is that we are going to see more provinces adopt BC's model of 100% industry funded recycling systems across Canada. Once that's in place we'll have a better price signal for producers of the cost of the various materials available to them. If they choose to use plastic, it may have a higher cost to them and they are going to think about alternatives. That will have to be balanced against food safety considerations.*

15. Electronics – is Canada successfully 'mining' trace metals from our recycled electronics?

*Many of the resources inside electronics, including plastic, glass, gold, silver and copper can be reused continuously without losing their properties. By recycling electronics, resources are recovered, recycled and reused — reducing our overall carbon footprint and lessening our dependence on mining for new resources. Recycling with EPRA/Recycle My Electronics programs make these minerals are separated within the recycling process and diverts e-waste from illegal export and Canadian landfills.*