

April 14th, 2022

## Call 2 Recycle BC Extended Producer Responsibility Program Plan for eMobility Products

### Feedback on the Draft Plan

Dear Mr. Zenobio,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. Zero Waste BC is a non-profit association dedicated to driving systemic change towards Zero Waste in BC. Zero Waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health. Our current resource consumption systems of linear take-make-waste not only create waste but also generate a huge amount of greenhouse gases which constitute some of the discharges that threaten the environment and human health. EPR programs can play a key role in changing these consumption systems. For more information on Zero Waste, please see the Zero Waste Hierarchy.<sup>1</sup>

We are pleased that BC has regulated these products and that this EPR program is expanding to include e-mobility batteries. We submit these comments in hope that the program will show leadership in the realm of EPR to move it beyond mere recycling to actually changing the nature of the products and how the service is delivered, as envisioned in the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment Canada-wide Action Plan for EPR.

Please see our comments by section below:

### Section 2. Appointment of Steward Agency

A Board with industry representatives from across Canada is an efficient system for many aspects of governance but the program lacks a mechanism that is BC-specific looking at both the level of service offered in BC and the achievement of environmental outcomes. We recommend the creation of a committee with a wide range of stakeholders including reuse and repair organizations, recyclers, local governments of varying sizes and locations, First Nations communities and environmental NGOs.

This committee should be empowered to effect change for the BC program. The commitment to engage with the BC Product Stewardship Council is appreciated but this needs to result in meaningful changes based on their feedback

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<sup>1</sup> Zero Waste Hierarchy: <https://zerowastecanada.ca/zero-waste-hierarchy/>.

### Section 3. Program Products

The list of accepted products is suitable. Given that it was noted that EPRA will offer a similar program, the plan should outline how the two programs will work together to ensure fairness for stewards, for communities and in handling orphan products.

### Section 4. Stakeholder Consultation

We recommend that the webinars are recorded and made available during the consultation period for those who were not able to attend even with the multiple different time slots.

#### **5.1 Collector Compensation**

Collection sites need to be compensated but in addition to the five factors noted, the program also needs to ensure that compensation considers the need to be open an adequate number of hours to be seen as a viable collection site and the payment needs to be enough to ensure these collection sites are viable and do not need to be subsidized by local governments nor the collection sites themselves. Where no sites exist and if Call2Recycle cannot contract with one, the program should deliver the service themselves (either by setting up a depot or providing the no-fee pick up service). The study conducted by MNP is appreciated but the actual test will be the number of businesses that choose to offer this service and feel that they are fairly compensated for it. This is particularly important as the volume and frequency of return of these products will likely be modest, particularly for smaller communities. The Concierge service sounds like it will address issues in many smaller communities but the plan is not clear if there are any excluded areas of the province. Ideally it is available to all BC residents and businesses. The program should cover any additional insurance requirements for collection sites, especially given the safety risk noted in section 8.2.

These products can have a large footprint, and bike retailers (the targeted collection site), tend to be small, especially in smaller communities. Increased foot traffic may not be enough of an incentive for a retailer to join as a collection site. Has Call2Recycle thought about this? How is Call2Recycle incentivizing a bike retailer to accept all e-mobility devices, beyond e-bikes?

#### **5.2 Collection System**

We are pleased that the program is going to undertake disassembly of the products. It is hoped (but not clear in the plan) that the parts recovered during disassembly have an option of reuse to repair other similar items. This should be a key part of the program. The program should also offer a battery replacement option (rather than discarding the whole item) and where not possible due to product design, work with the producers to make it possible and charge variable fees based on this.

The plan outlines five recycling streams but does not specify at what level of the hierarchy these fall -are the plastics all going to be recycled into new products or are some being used as fuel (and if so, how much)? Similar questions exist for the electronics and wiring. The plan needs to ensure the materials are handled as high on the hierarchy as possible (as per the

Recycling Regulation) and where it is not possible, the program needs to work with the producers to improve this. This also needs to be very clear in the reporting.

We are pleased that the program will participate in waste audits and make the details public. The annual awareness survey is also a good step.

The program also needs to consider how it will address issues if the only bike retailer in a small community is part of the other program. There should not be any requirement by collection sites to differentiate between the other program versus Call2Recycle e-mobility devices, to put into different collection containers. That is a level of detail that most sites will not be able to provide.

### **5.3 Consumer Accessibility**

We are pleased that the program does not use the SABC accessibility standard but feel that 95% of British Columbians residing within 15 km of a collection facility may not be the right target. Programs should provide service in all municipalities and if no service provider can be contracted, the program itself should set up the collection depot or provide a mailback system at no cost to the person sending it. The program should work with the BC Product Stewardship Council and the Indigenous Zero Waste Technical Advisory Group to determine the underserved communities.<sup>2</sup> The target for coverage should be that 100% of the total population has access to either a collection depot, or the free concierge service. Collection events should only ever be a one-time stop gap measure to provide service in an unserved community (where the program should be offering service by the following year) or in addition to existing service as part of awareness raising for multiple product streams.

### **5.4 Collection Targets and Recovery Rates**

A good program needs sound data. This is even more important when there is more than one program collecting similar product types. The program should track collection of products by unit and compensate the collectors for this. In this way, the programs will have a more accurate sense of its collection rate. The collectors should also note the brand so that it can be determined if the competing programs are fairly sharing the costs. Producer reporting should also include weights of the models sold so that future data analysis can use that to assess capture rate.

The commitment to recycle 100% of eMobility products available is a great target but if the accessibility target is only for 95% of the BC citizens and the awareness target lower still, it is unlikely to be met. The program needs to develop stronger systems to achieve this and to measure it.

### **5.5 Collection Systems, Consumer Accessibility Performance targets and Reporting Commitments**

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<sup>2</sup> Product Care's work with IZWTAG is commendable and should continue and expand.

As noted, the target should be for 100% of communities in BC having access to a collection site or being served by the no-fee concierge service.

The Recovery Rate of 100% of what is available for collection is ambitious but does not note how the amount captured by the other program will be considered in this measure. The program needs to develop a system for understanding what is put into the market place each year (by unit, weight and brand), what is captured each year (by unit, weight and brand), how much waste is prevented through repair/battery changeout/use for parts, how much is recycled, lifespans of products by type and brand, how these numbers compare with the other program and what would be a fair system to handle discrepancies.

The use of waste composition audits is good but if Call2Recycle is unable to calculate the percentage of product collected, then Call2Recycle should be required to calculate its effectiveness using waste composition studies done annually across BC. The results should be published on the Call2Recycle website, and all the details of the studies should be included in the annual report to the BC Government and made public. This data should be used to understand the degree of success of collection given the challenges noted in the plan. To achieve this, Call2Recycle should work with other producers to fund more waste audits and ask local governments to partner with them in allowing access to sites. The data needs to be analyzed along with that of the other program.

Another measure that may be useful is the convenience of accessing depots. The 2018 BC survey noted that 50% of residents found recycling household batteries very convenient and another 35% found it somewhat convenient.<sup>3</sup> Given that Call2Recycle plans to expand in its existing collection network for batteries to include the eMobility products, a target to raise this number as well as an annual survey to measure it would be useful. The survey also noted that up to 41% of respondents may throw household batteries in the garbage, the third highest after Styrofoam and lighting products. When asked why these household batteries may have been thrown in the garbage, 25% did not know the item was recyclable, 29% did not know where to take it and a significant 15% said there was nowhere to take it or no way to get it there. This shows some key areas that this program plan should work to excel at and that this program needs to go beyond what has happened to date for household batteries.

## Section 6 Consumer Awareness

We appreciate the communications strategies included in the plan but given that the program will be relying on the same methods as it uses to communicate about recycling batteries, the low awareness for a product that has had an EPR program for years is concerning. Only 87% of the BC residents (2020 Annual Report) were aware of the program and only 51% recycled all their batteries. The goal should be to get 95% (not 50%) of the population aware of the

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<sup>3</sup> BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (2018). Consumer Awareness Survey of Extended Producer Responsibility Programs in BC. Accessed at [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/waste-management/recycling/recycle/rel-res/consumer\\_awareness\\_survey\\_of\\_epr\\_2017.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/waste-management/recycling/recycle/rel-res/consumer_awareness_survey_of_epr_2017.pdf).

program by 2025 (and later 100%). To do otherwise is to continue to externalize costs to the public and the environment. The program could also pursue disposal bans with local governments to ensure consumers do the right thing but also that they are aware that throwing these products away is not appropriate.

As this is a brand-new program, what is Call2Recycle doing in Years 1 and 2 to promote this program above and beyond the normal EPR promotion, and beyond using RCBC and SABC?

The use of the annual survey is good as is the plan for more detailed research and testing for eMobility products. Testing audiences should be done after new campaigns to determine if they were effective or if they should be adjusted. If the program does not meet the high bar for awareness, then the budgets should be adjusted to address the key barriers to better performance.

Developing networks for repair and battery replacement will be a key draw for all audiences. One target audience missing is that of mountain bikers, many of whom are using e-bikes. There is a strong network of community organizations that the program could work with to reach this audience.

Also note that many EPR programs do not have, or do not have easily accessible, materials in languages other than English that address different users of their program. Any residents who do not speak English are not able to easily participate in the programs. Based on the 2016 Census, 15% of BC Households speak a non-Official language at home, so would need EPR materials and information to be translated into a different language to be aware of a program (let alone participate). This is especially important for the more consumer/resident focused programs such as this one.

## Section 7 Management of Program Costs

The program should plan to develop differential fees based on certain criteria such as lifespan, use of easy to recycle materials, ease of replacing barriers, ease of repair, etc. to drive product design change as intended by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment. The fees should also be set at a high level to ensure the program has good data on collection rates, provides a comprehensive collection network, rapidly increases awareness and fulfills the mandate for redesign, reuse and repair. While the plan says that this may be difficult, it should be aided by the fact that Call2Recycle manages other programs in other provinces and similar programs exist elsewhere.

Fees should not be based on actual costs to collect and manage but what would be needed to meet all targets including its 100% recovery target. In this way, the program would have funds to rapidly scale up actions if the 100% recovery target is not met. To only base costs on what is collected rewards the program and its producers for underperforming.

## Section 8 Management of Environmental Impacts

As noted above, we feel the program should have a key role in reducing and reusing as well as recycling. With its close ties to producers, the program should be well positioned to ensure refurbishing is done properly and that risks are minimized.

We appreciate Call2Recycle's plan to certify and audit downstream collectors to ensure responsible recycling. Transparency is key so the annual report should provide full details of where materials flow and what gets recycled, downcycled or disposed (burned or landfilled). Use of materials for energy should not be accepted as responsible handling.

### **Redesign/reuse**

The objective of the program should be two-fold - one is to provide an effective collection and recycling program. The other is "as a means to provide clear signals to producers that Canadians want improved environmental performance of products and better product design with reduced use of toxic materials, enhanced recyclability, increased use of recycled materials, reduced life-cycle energy and materials consumption and reduced greenhouse gas emissions."<sup>4</sup> It is unclear that the program is trying to take any active role in working towards the second CCME objective. The program plan should outline steps the program is taking to understand what materials are in the products and how it is communicating with product developers to influence design and provide feedback from the program (especially around challenges for reuse, repair, refurbishing and battery replacement). This is important so that producers can move beyond design just for operational and logistical efficiencies to also incorporate designing for the environment.

Some questions arose from the webinar on this topic. Call2Recycle is stating that reusable components will be reused. How have the producers committed to this, and how will the Program be reporting out on it? What is Call2Recycle doing to support Right to Repair through this new program (beyond repairing e-bikes).

Should the program not take the lead in redesigning its products, the provincial government may wish to explore regulations being pursued in other jurisdictions that require products to last a certain length of time, come with mandatory warranties of longer terms, have availability of parts, are designed for repair, and have access to repair or servicing.

### **Recycle**

We appreciate that Call2Recycle aims to recycle the five streams of materials but more detail could be provided on the end fate of these, particularly the plastic that is considered recycling.

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (2009). Canada-wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility. [https://ccme.ca/en/res/cap-epr\\_e.pdf](https://ccme.ca/en/res/cap-epr_e.pdf)

## Section 10 Performance Management

We have made suggestions above for changes to these targets. The number and location of contracted sites by community and RD should be provided as well as a list of any municipalities that do not have a permanent depot. The population with access to collection should have a target of 100%, with all municipalities served as well as any First Nations locations as determined in conjunction with the First Nations.

Reporting on the products sold and should include weight, unit and brand.

The program should report out on materials collected and the end fates by weight including the amount that gets disposed (at collection sites as well as after recycling). Problematic materials or systems should be noted in the annual reports and discussions held on resolving identified issues with the producers.

As this program will initially begin with individual direct pick-up of products that are at end-of-life, Call2Recycle should report out on the associated GHGs from the direct pick-ups, and also do something to reduce the GHGs associated with these pick-ups (e.g., use electric vehicles).

Waste audits should be done for a rotating collection of locations across BC annually and this data should be used to determine the collection rate (the amount not collected versus the amount collected). This should be planned in conjunction with the BC Product Stewardship Council and UBCM and ultimately should greatly increase the number of audits done. A system to factor in the parallel collection by another programs needs to be developed.

Collection events where no service exists should only happen once with a target to establish collection in that community by the following year.

The consumer awareness target should be 95% of the population aware by 2025 (and later 100%). There should survey done of different product user groups to determine areas for improvement.

Program costs should also be reported compared to the value of product introduced into the market annually. Efforts should be made to quantify the costs that remain externalized to others (such as depot operators, local governments, illegal dumping clean up efforts, and the environment) and attempts made to rectify this. Differential fees should be updated annually based on research.

Governance systems should seek to include other stakeholders such as local governments, First nations, ENGOs and others outside of only producers.

As noted, efforts to reduce environmental impacts should be significantly strengthened and then targets set for the amount of reuse, repair, refurbishment and use of parts.

The program plan should provide significant advances needed to reach the potential of EPR programs as envisioned in the CCME plan. We hope that this information is helpful in crafting the renewed plan.

Sincerely,  
Sue Maxwell  
On behalf of Zero Waste BC