



SUI Insights: What We Heard



OVERVIEW

On January 16, 2023, the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley held a workshop in partnership with the Town of Banff and with the support of Banff Lake Louise Hospitality Association (BLLHA) and Banff Lake Louise Tourism (BLLT), at the Moose Hotel in Banff from 12pm-3pm.

OBJECTIVES

The intent of the workshop was for attendees to:

- Understand the need to shift to reusable cups and containers
- Know how the Town of Banff, BLLHA, and BLLT is supporting this shift
- Hear from and provide feedback on potential reusable service providers
- Identify programs and resources that can support their shift to reusables
- Imagine what their business would be like if using reusable items
- Commit to their next steps toward reuse



AGENDA

1. Presentations 12:00-1:45pm
 - Andrea Johancsik (Biosphere Institute) – Big Picture on Reuse
 - Carla Bitz (Town of Banff) – SUI Bylaw and Context
 - David Matys & Karli Fleury (BLLT, BLLHA) – Vision for Banff
 - John MacInnes (Earthware)
 - Cody Irwin (Sharewares)
2. Table group discussion 1:50-2:50pm
3. Share back and wrap-up 2:50-3:00pm

Single Use Items (SUI) Bylaw

Town of Banff presented a summary of the SUI Bylaw to participants. First reading of the Bylaw occurred December 19, 2022 and Council postponed second and third reading of the Bylaw to February 13, 2023. An additional information session is scheduled for January 31.

WHO WAS THERE?

46 people were present including facilitators, with participating businesses represented in the following sectors: Accommodations, Dine-in, Fast Food, Coffee Shops, and other operators. For a full list, see the end of this document.



TABLE GROUP QUESTIONS

- Question 1: What can your business do NOW to begin action on reuse practices?
- Question 2: What are key factors your business wants/needs in a reusable cup or container service? Why?
- Question 3: What challenges might your business encounter with a reusable container program? What do you need to overcome these challenges?



Introduce yourself, who you are working with, are you currently undertaking any reuse initiatives at your business?

INTRODUCTION

Current initiatives:

Businesses listed the following current practices they are using to reduce single use items or move to reuse:

- Offering accessories by request
- Promoting alternatives, i.e., offering sleeves instead of double cup
- Charging more for single use items
- Increasing water fountains and eliminating plastic bottles
- Eliminating “obvious” items in food service business to a reusable option, such as no single use creamers
- Providing plateware
- Voluntary practices such as elimination of shampoo/container in hotels

Recycling/Composting

Participants listed a number of current recycling and composting practices, in particular use of paper items such as paper bags and straws. Successful practices mentioned include food waste diversion practice in hotel rooms and a return system for suppliers for cardboard.

Participants also mentioned challenges with recycling, such as not having control of where it goes, having appropriate space to store materials, and desire to “do better.”

Behavior/Culture

One business also mentioned a culture of reuse among staff.



Q1: What can your business do NOW to begin action on reuse practices?

- What would be the next step you could take?
- If you could make a change tomorrow, what would it be?

Q2: What are key factors your business wants/needs in a reusable cup or container service? Why?

- i.e., cost, environmental, marketing, logistics, materials, staff engagement
- What would it look like to operate only with reusables?

Q3: What challenges might your business encounter with a reusable program? What do you need to overcome these challenges?

- What is the timing required to make changes?
- How could the Biosphere Institute support you?

QUESTION 1

Participants suggested some practices that they could begin now to action reuse:

- BYO (Bring-Your-Own) container incentives or communications/signage
- Could trial a program using the most commonly used container
- Start with Earthware
- Ask customer to go or to stay – porcelain vs plastic

Participants expressed two opposing sentiments regarding implementation of reuse programs. One was the sentiment to begin now (“we have to start somewhere” and “to start small and work out the kinks as we go”), while the other was to start carefully and do it right – (“we need time to figure it out”, “[we need] work, training, research”).

QUESTION 2 and QUESTION 3

To summarize participant feedback, we combined Question 2 and Question 3 into key themes, due to the similarity in responses to each question.

Taking all the comments from Question 2 & 3 together, the top four themes were:

- Communications & Education
- Cost
- Timing
- The Right Containers

We also include a summary of the other themes:

- Convenience
- Visitor/Tourist Perspective
- Turnkey Solution
- Safety & Liability
- Avoid Unintended Consequences
- Municipal, Regional & National Coordination



- *Inform visitors before they arrive, such as starting at the airport*
- *Destination-wide campaign*
- *Visitor communications plan / strategy in place*
- *Need for robust and ongoing visitor education*
- *Corporate requirements for branding and signage*
- *Get the right message out that includes changing behavior*

- *Pilot in a few or single restaurant*
- *Easier in hotel – visitor always comes back at end of day*
- *Phase it in – common items & not all at once; phased approach that allowed us to test*
- *Look at the garbage stream to find priority areas, by business for business*
- *Need for budget, timing, operational approval at corporate level – can take years*
- *Needs to be step-by-step*
- *Timing to accommodate communication to tourists*
- *A lot of nuance & kinks to work out*
- *Swimming upstream*
- *Supply issues, need for supply chain to be consistent and reliable*
- *Time needed for ordering materials and budgeting*
- *Different timeline for different business types (i.e., fast food vs dine-in restaurant)*

Top Theme: Communications & Education

We heard a need for broad and sustained education that takes into account the visitor experience from pre-arrival through to visitation and departure.

Participants raised concerns about backlash falling on businesses if communication are ineffective, citing COVID-19 pandemic as an example where despite widespread messaging, it still fell on businesses to respond to complaints. Another concern was the timing needed to implement appropriate communications, branding, and marketing, including corporate signage, destination-wide campaigns, and getting the message right.

Top Theme: Cost

We heard comments, questions and concerns around cost for businesses and customers.

For businesses, we heard a theme around finding the right price point for a reusable container program, where there is a fine line between whether additional costs are punitive for customers, or incentivize behavior change. Participants also mentioned labour as a driver of cost increase, if more labour is required to operationalize a reuse program. We also heard the need to address more complicated models such as different deposit costs for different types of containers.

Businesses raised concerns around passing costs onto customers and the impact this would have on them.

Solutions included help with making reusable containers more affordable such as Town of Banff incentives to purchase reusable containers, piloting a cost model that works such as a solution with the same or lower cost than current.

Top Theme: Timing

We heard many comments around timing required to move to a reusable program. The common theme was that time was needed to allow businesses to test approaches, iron out kinks, and adapt based on a business' budget, operational needs, supply chain issues, and corporate requirements. We also heard need for time to communicate to tourists and customers.

Some advocated for a pilot project in one or a few restaurants. A popular idea was using a phased approach, with ideas such as starting with 'easier' businesses (i.e., dine-in restaurants), common container types, or prioritize businesses that need to reduce their waste.



- *I don't want to eat/drink out of plastic*
- *Must be presentable over its lifetime; scratches, wear/tear/coloration; looks clean, fresh and new*
- *Portion sizes and sizing options*
- *Material type, material thickness, feel, behavior of container (i.e., how fast liquid cools, etc)*
- *Ability to brand*
- *Summer vs winter, cold vs hot beverage containers*
- *No one-size-fits-all solution*
- *Different types of food, variety of packages*

TOP Theme: The Right Containers

We heard many comments about needing to ensure the containers meet businesses' and customers' needs. The most mentioned comment was around the need for various types of containers to accommodate different types of food. Participants outlined needs around size (big or small), temperature (hot vs cold). In addition, we heard the need for other characteristics such as containers being leak-proof, size options, ability to add branding, performance, design, and material type.

There was specific mention around cups as an essential type of container.

Theme: Convenience

Convenience was a theme and referred to for both businesses and visitors. Some participants mentioned they did not want containers coming back to their business, so a third-party would have to handle collection and distribution. The need for centralized collection systems was mentioned as a possible solution.

Participants raised concerns around possibility of additional workload for hotel staff, and the need for sufficient collection systems in place.

Theme: Visitor/Tourist Perspective

Participants from all tables shared perspectives from the unique tourism context that is Banff, emphasizing that Banff is unlike other municipalities. We heard mention of specific needs for tourists, such as offline access, simplicity, and education. For instance, a couple participants mentioned a technology solution such as a QR scan code might not work for tourists if they don't have internet access while in Canada.

We heard skepticism that reuse programs will work given that Banff and its tourists are not a closed-loop system and that visitors will not return containers and therefore create waste.

Theme: Safety & Liability

We heard a theme around safety and liability concerns with accepting dirty containers in their location, and the need for proper cleaning, disinfection, and sanitation. Some participants mentioned concerns of potential cross-contamination in kitchen facilities. Some businesses do not accept dirty containers, especially from other locations.



Theme: Turnkey Solution

The idea of a turnkey solution was mentioned by multiple groups so we include it here as a separate theme. Participants listed the characteristics of a turnkey solution:

- Pick up dirty containers
- Washing facilities, including proper cleaning/sanitation
- Returning clean containers

One group also brought forward the idea of integrating with the bottle depot. Businesses expressed a need for simplicity due to staff turnover and staff training requirements, a need for a culture of sustainability, and a suggestion to start behind-the-counter (i.e., in the kitchen).

We heard regular mention of the need for proper washing facilities as some businesses cannot do that themselves without major upgrades or more staff. We also heard the need for suppliers to be on board with options for distribution.

Theme: Municipal, Regional, National Coordination

There were many comments themed around the need for local, regional, and global changes to be more coordinated. Participants mentioned the need to move alongside other businesses and regional, national or global movements, in order to have lasting change. We heard a desire for Town of Banff support such as budget and infrastructure.

One participant brought up that as soon as their BC location changes to require recyclable containers, their location will too, highlighting the influence of large corporations.

Theme: Avoid Unintended Consequences

We heard concern for unintended consequences of reusable container programs like creating “more expensive garbage.” There was a concern that reusable products end up in the waste stream rather than being reused, and that this would have environmental and cost consequences. We heard skepticism that reusable options are truly better for the environment than compostable or recyclable options.

Other Ideas

Participants mentioned a number of creative ideas that didn't fit into the themes mentioned, such as “kits” for visitors, engaging residents first, and integrating into the Alberta & BC Parks systems.

We also heard mention of visioning what change looks like in our community, clarity on who “owns” the idea of implementing a reuse model, evaluating alternatives, focusing instead on compostable containers, and evaluating different material types other than plastic.

- *Need support of the Town of Banff, Town should provide infrastructure, budget support*
- *We need collective buy-in*
- *Parks Canada involvement or partnership, such as return containers at trailheads*
- *The whole country needs to move with us to change behavior*
- *A lot of businesses need to participate and be bought-in, or else there is competitive advantage*
- *Successful examples mentioned (i.e., France, Germany) worked because it was the whole country with years of planning*

- *Give out a “reuse kit” with the Parks Pass and have it returned for a refund at the Visitor Centre*
- *Consider sustainable “kits” at hotels*
- *Make the reuse item part of the Banff experience, such as a souvenir*
- *Start with residents and provide free reusable containers to start*
- *People are suspicious of plastic, maybe another product would be better*
- *It has to be integrated in the Alberta & BC park system otherwise the model won't work*



NEXT STEPS

This report summarizes what we heard in the January 16 session. We are considering this feedback and working to design future sessions and engagement opportunities to explore cup and container reuse models in Banff.

PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

- Banff Aspen Lodge/Whitebark
- Banff Ave Brewing Co
- Banff Hospitality Collective (BHC)
- Banff Caribou Lodge & Spa
- Banff Canmore Community Foundation (BCCF)
- Banff Centre
- The Block / Shokyu
- Boston Pizza / A&W
- Canalta Lodges
- Cascade Plaza – Atlas Devco
- Caribou Properties
- Chilli's
- Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts CRMR
- Edo Japan
- Evelyn's
- Fairmont Banff Springs
- Fox Hotel & Suites
- GFS
- Good Earth Banff
- Irwins Mountain Inn & Red Carpet Inn
- LUX Cinema
- Pacini
- Ptarmigan Inn
- Pursuit
- Ramen Arashi
- Rimrock resort Hotel
- Rundlewear
- Starbucks
- Tim Hortons
- Tunnel Mountain Resort