

# Small Group Meeting Summary: Grocery Stores, Convenience Stores

## Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw Review

Meeting Date: October 23, 2018

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## 1. Background

Metro Vancouver, in an effort to reduce the amount of fats, oils and grease entering the sewer system, is engaging food sector establishments and related stakeholders to obtain feedback on a review of the Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw (the bylaw).

Specific areas of interest and exploration included:

- Effectiveness of the current bylaw
- Challenges associated with meeting bylaw requirements
- Educational initiatives that might improve awareness, understanding and compliance with the bylaw

Metro Vancouver recognizes that changes to the Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw (the bylaw) could have an impact on stakeholders and is committed to delivering a responsive, transparent stakeholder engagement program. A variety of forums are being used to learn about stakeholder issues and interests related to the bylaw. Information collected during the engagement period will inform the bylaw review. Results and recommendations will be reported back to stakeholders and the Utilities Committee and Greater Vancouver Sewerage & Drainage District (GVS&DD) Board at the end of the process.

Small Group Meetings are being hosted to support a discussion of factors inhibiting compliance and the special considerations of stakeholder groups with unique interests or characteristics.

## 2. Notification

In August 2018, Metro Vancouver issued invitations to engage in the bylaw review, by email and post, to over 10,000 Food Sector Establishments and other stakeholders within Metro Vancouver. Invited stakeholders responded to Metro Vancouver by email to confirm their interest. Those confirming their interest and availability were assigned to the appropriate stakeholder meeting.

## 3. Small Group Meeting

### **Date & Location**

Tuesday, October 23, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Metro Vancouver – 28th Floor Conference Centre  
Metrotower Office Complex  
4730 Kingsway  
Burnaby

### **Materials**

- PowerPoint presentation
- Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw No. 268, 2012
- Grease & Commercial Kitchens brochure

### Meeting Agenda & Format

- Introductions
- Engagement process
- Background
- Topic 1 – Experience with grease interceptor issues
- Topic 2 – Unique business/sector attributes
- Topic 3 – Training & education tools
- Final thoughts & next steps

### Participants

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Louie Pulice	Buy Low
Andrew Fok	Fraser Health
Andrew Klukas	Western Convenience Store Association
Sam Lu	Super Grocer & Pharmacy

### Presenters & Support

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Tom Sadleir	Program Manager, Public Involvement, Metro Vancouver
Linda Parkinson	Program Manager, Source Control Utility & Planning, Metro Vancouver
Marlene Fuhrmann	Permitting Specialist, Environmental Regulation and Enforcement, Metro Vancouver

NAME	ORGANIZATION
James Smith	Environmental Contamination, City of Vancouver
Kirsty Dick	Creative Services Manager, Lucent Quay (Facilitator)
Galen Aker	Communications Coordinator, Lucent Quay (Recorder)

## 4. Presentation

Metro Vancouver presented the following to provide context for the bylaw review:

### **Engagement Process – Tom Sadleir**

- Purpose of the bylaw review
- Engagement objectives
- Timeline

### **Background – Linda Parkinson**

- Metro Vancouver management of the region’s wastewater
- Metro Vancouver’s Source Control Program
- Effects of fats, oils and grease on infrastructure
- Description of current bylaw

### **Bylaw Enforcement – Marlene Fuhrmann**

- Working with municipalities to identify “hot spots”
- Inspections to date
- Common violations
- Fees

## 5. Feedback

A series of discussion topics were used to obtain feedback on the bylaw review. The following lays out the comments and questions that were raised at the meeting.

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### Topic 1

What concerns do you have with the current bylaw?

What food ingredients are the main sources of fats, oils and grease in your operation?

How do you currently keep fats, oils and grease out of the sewer system?

Have you encountered solutions and ideas elsewhere, to keep fats, oils and grease out of the sewer system?

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- Not familiar with the bylaw. I administer an association (Western Convenience Stores) so am here to take information back to my membership.
- If the question is “Do I have an awareness of the bylaw in the sense of installing them?” Then yes, I am very familiar with the bylaw and its requirements with new builds.
- How do you patrol or monitor existing buildings that never had grease interceptors installed?
- Are existing buildings in older developed areas being enforced to install grease interceptors?
- While I don’t have any current concerns with the current bylaw, I would like to see developers implement bylaw requirements as part of new build plans. We are experiencing more mixed-use buildings with residential above and commercial down below (CRU – Commercial Retail Unit). A grocery store today is not what a grocery store was 30 years ago where we just sold dry goods. Groceries are becoming more like “little restaurants” and developers are not designing facilities to accommodate them. The responsibility then is flipped to the grocery stores to install them, which can be quite costly.
- How do you retrofit an older building that has no way to meet the plumbing code if you need to install a grease interceptor?
- If a business moves into an existing building it triggers inspections. The building has not been on inspectors’ radar until a new tenant comes in and they find it is not compliant. And there is no way to upgrade based on old infrastructure.
- It’s not a slab problem – in-slab is fine. It’s really the cleanest way to do a grease interceptor. A lot of developers who are building new towers are suspending the grease interceptor to keep floor space, which makes it very difficult for companies to clean them. I believe the building designer needs to accommodate for the bylaw. Right now, they don’t really care about it – they are just trying to maximize space and it becomes the responsibility of the new tenant to become compliant. I don’t know how some would upgrade to today’s bylaw without major renovations.
- It’s not becoming more challenging because of the space issues, but because developers are not thinking ahead to who the tenant might be. Everyone has some type of kitchen that is creating additional grease.

- We (Husky/Chevron) are upgrading some sites after 20 years. To a growing extent, food preparation is happening on site.
- For smaller convenience stores, we work with the worst kinds of fats, oils and grease. I'm really not that familiar with the inside store operations—I'm here to learn more than anything.
- Rather than food being prepared on site, more and more it's prepared elsewhere and brought on site.
- In the case where a restaurant is attached to a gas station or convenience store, it would probably be mostly brought in. I am thinking more of on-site fast food (e.g. chicken).
- Our business currently has regular meat cutting operations, so we have an interceptor. We found it easier to keep the grease interceptor above ground and to replace it because they do wear out. Our meat department is the biggest collector. The deli isn't too bad – they work with liquid oils more. The biggest problems exist where you have animal fats. It would be helpful to acknowledge that there are different operations and they generate different kinds of fats.
- All our operations run a full-service meat department along with a lot of cooking with fats. Our grease traps have increased in size considerably over time.
- In terms of things we're doing onsite to reduce the release of FOG into the sewer system, we have used enzymes to break down some of the fats. [MV: Prohibited in Bylaw] We also experimented with technology that dissolved the grease which went down into the sewer; it was not very widely accepted.
- Enzymes broke down everything except an avocado pit and large bones. It broke everything down which then went down the drain. It's like a digester, but I don't have it anymore because it wasn't approved; the parts per million going down the drain were too high and we experimented with it in its early stages. A different large grocer is working with the same company we started with and I believe they are still doing it.
- Another grocer is experimenting with a "microwave on steroids" that turns the waste into compost, which was then bagged and sold as natural compost. This includes all of the food scraps off plates, everything, except for plastic. It's a bigger unit placed out with the dumpsters and not attached to any fixtures inside.
- We use a similar system for organic waste. It works like a dehydrator. It takes 90% of the water out and results in a granular fibre texture compound. We don't put meat or fats in it but it works really well. The water used in the process evaporates. The electricity costs were very high. Farmers started being interested in the compost. We would buy product from farmers and then they would haul away the waste on the same trip. This system did not discharge to the sewer.
- The bylaw states urinals, toilets and hand sinks are not required to be connected to a grease interceptor. Some establishments don't have a mop sink and they dispose mop water in the toilet, or with limited sinks they use their hand wash sink as a food prep sink, or some will dispose of it in a storm drain in the back alley. They do this based on their limited space. Very often it's obvious that the toilet or three-compartment sinks are being used for disposing of wastewater.

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## Topic 2

What is special or unique about your business and sector?

What would make it easier for you to be compliant and to keep fats, oil and grease out of the sewer system?

Are there defined Infrastructure replacement/upgrade cycles or timelines that could also include grease interceptors?

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- When it comes to bylaws and codes, how much interaction is there with building codes - the grease interceptor bylaw versus the building code?
  - We recently did a small store and were advised we needed to install a mop sink. When we implemented the mop sink it was deemed in contravention with health authority requirement stating it needed to be in a separate room. This is forcing smaller retailers to cut corners because of conflicting requirements.
  - We had three different people giving different requirements that conflicted. That is basically my point: How often do the three different players talk to each other as to what is acceptable?
  - We want someone to be the coordinator between the jurisdictions, retailers are the coordinator right now, there needs to be someone who monitors all of the different levels of bylaws and jurisdictions where sometimes there is confusion.
  - If you made the bylaw simpler it would be easier to comply. Specifically, that means less conflict between the requirements. Which is more important? (e.g. connecting a mop sink to a grease interceptor: Two regulators said yes and one said no; there is no consistency).
  - The understanding of requirements is clear with new builds. Greater challenge is with existing mixed-use buildings trying to get up to standard vs. what makes financial sense.
  - Has there been any study of how much grease enters the system if a bucket of mop water is dumped into the toilet?
  - What's the difference between a mop sink and a janitor sink? A janitor sink does not have to go through an interceptor, but a mop sink does? In my plans, if I just call it a janitor sink it doesn't need to be connected?
  - Regarding refurbishment cycles, Husky has been 20 years, Chevron is looking to upgrade soon, and Macs is rebranding as Circle K. There is no specific standard; the decision to renovate is business driven.
  - For mixed-use, multi-residential buildings, could there be one large interceptor?
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## Topic 3

Although infrequent in commercial kitchens, what concerns would you have if Metro Vancouver adopted a ban on food grinders?



Are you familiar with, or ever considered adding a waste digester to at your operation? What concerns would you have if Metro Vancouver adopted a ban on food waste digesters?

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- We moved away from food grinders due to the cost to maintain it. With the current cost of removal of garbage and organics it might be something to reconsider. It is challenging to dispose of organics, only two facilities accept organics and they can dictate what they want to charge.
  - There might be better systems out there, we didn't explore it beyond one trial.
  - We don't have a digester connected to the sewer system. We worked with the same company as T&T and they marketed their digester as producing water that would be drinkable.
  - Regarding our trial, it was early in the process, it was a \$65,000 experiment that required a lot of maintenance and it was digesting but going straight down the drain. We were told it probably doesn't meet the bylaw. We abandoned it. The driver for this was around the organics ban.
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#### **Topic 4**

What could Metro Vancouver do to help with education and awareness?

Do you have ideas for training and education tools?

What else might help?

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- Health inspectors come on a regular basis; they could start distributing material.
- Develop a website where businesses can log on and self-report maintenance records.
- Cleaning companies should be mandated to put their records up for review. Anyone monitoring or cleaning should have their records uploaded.
- Plumbers come for the annual backflow test and report the results; you could develop a similar system.
- Vancouver has a list of approved plumbers/inspectors; they tag the mechanism and report to the City it's been done. The City knows it has been tested and to their standards.
- Feedback makes everyone's lives simpler. It would allow Metro Vancouver to identify specific food sector establishments for review if they have not had a proper inspection.
- Regarding an approved vs preferred hauler program: You have a website with *approved* haulers, not just preferred; approved haulers would have the log in and be able to report.
- Because you're not enforcing the plumber you're enforcing the business.
- A preferred hauler program would make it easier, but it won't eliminate a false sense of compliance from food sector establishments.

- Makes more sense to centralize it, instead of asking 10,000 to comply it comes down to approved haulers.
- Develop due diligence tools to score locations. If Metro Vancouver can provide information that can feed into an app and provides a score, that would be helpful.
- The frequency of maintenance and clean outs varies greatly by establishment.
- Most of the challenges must be with existing buildings that may or may not be compliant.
- How do you deal with mom-and-pop food sector establishments without the finances to comply?
- You have a team going and inspecting grease interceptors?
- The multiple jurisdictional requirements are complex. Business owners are busy people, the simpler you can make it to comply the better. Provide them with simple tools so they can do their due diligence.
- We mostly deal with new builds and we go through engineering consultants. The challenge is mostly around where to install the interceptors, not the requirements around needing an interceptor. The challenge is moving into existing buildings and making them compliant – you can't get a permit if you're not compliant in new builds.
- We can use a mechanical engineer, but engineers come at a cost; are there other resources that are cheaper to get advice on their grease interceptor for smaller businesses? Is there an avenue for smaller stores to get compliant without a large price tag?
- Do inspectors not have that type of knowledge to give direction?

## 6. Next Steps

Metro Vancouver will compile the key themes raised in all small group meetings and develop discussion topics for the Working Group, which will meet 5-6 times in 2019/20. Metro Vancouver will recruit Working Group members from the varied stakeholder groups that participated in the Small Group Meetings. The Working Group will be guided by a Terms of Reference. Sub-groups may be formed to deal with technical or sector-specific issues



*Meeting concluded at 2:30 p.m.*