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WHITECAPS FANS ARE RECYCLING CHAMPS

Vancouver Whitecaps FC fans scored a major victory for the environment by improving the amount of solid waste that was recycled or composted at home matches from just 10 per cent up to 70 per cent.

The GreenZone Sustainability Kick pilot program, which was a partnership between Vancouver Whitecaps FC, the City of Burnaby, and Metro Vancouver, provided the means for fans at home games to recycle or compost almost all of the materials left from snack and beverage purchases.

At the start of the season, about three-quarters of the material that used to be hauled to landfill after Whitecaps home matches passed through the hands of fans, and almost all of it was left in Swangard Stadium stands. That means about 400 kilograms of material was taken to landfill after each game.

“The GreenZone Sustainability Kick program proved to be a huge success on all accounts,” said Whitecaps president Bob Lenarduzzi. “Thanks to the great support of our fans and our partners, we were able to make a significant difference through the course of our season. We will look to build on the progress we made for next year and beyond.”

“This is about Whitecaps fans taking responsibility for their trash, a behaviour they’ll hopefully adopt at home,” said Marvin Hunt, the Chair of Metro Vancouver’s Waste Management Committee and a City of Surrey Councillor. “People who attended our Zero Waste Challenge consultations told us they want the region to put less garbage in the landfill. We can provide the means – as we did at Swangard – but it will be up to every resident to separate what can be recycled and composted.”

The GreenZone Sustainability Kick starts with reducing the trash coming into Swangard by ensuring concessionaires provide meals and beverages in recyclable or compostable containers, eliminating single-serve items and their associated packaging, as well as finding reusable options to further eliminate material from the waste stream. Signs throughout the stadium directed fans to source-separation stations, with containers for recyclables, returnables, and compostables. Volunteers helped fans make the best use of those waste stations.

“We’re going to apply what staff learned from the Swangard Stadium pilot to make sure we continue to divert recyclables and compost from the stands following the games,” said Dan Johnston, a member of Metro Vancouver’s Waste Management Committee and City of Burnaby Councillor.

Lessons learned will inform Metro Vancouver’s draft guidelines for waste reduction in stadiums and arenas. Proven best practices will eventually be shared with Metro Vancouver’s 22 member municipalities for adoption in arenas and sports facilities throughout the region.

