

Banff Isn't Disposable

COVID-19 safety protocol for reusable containers

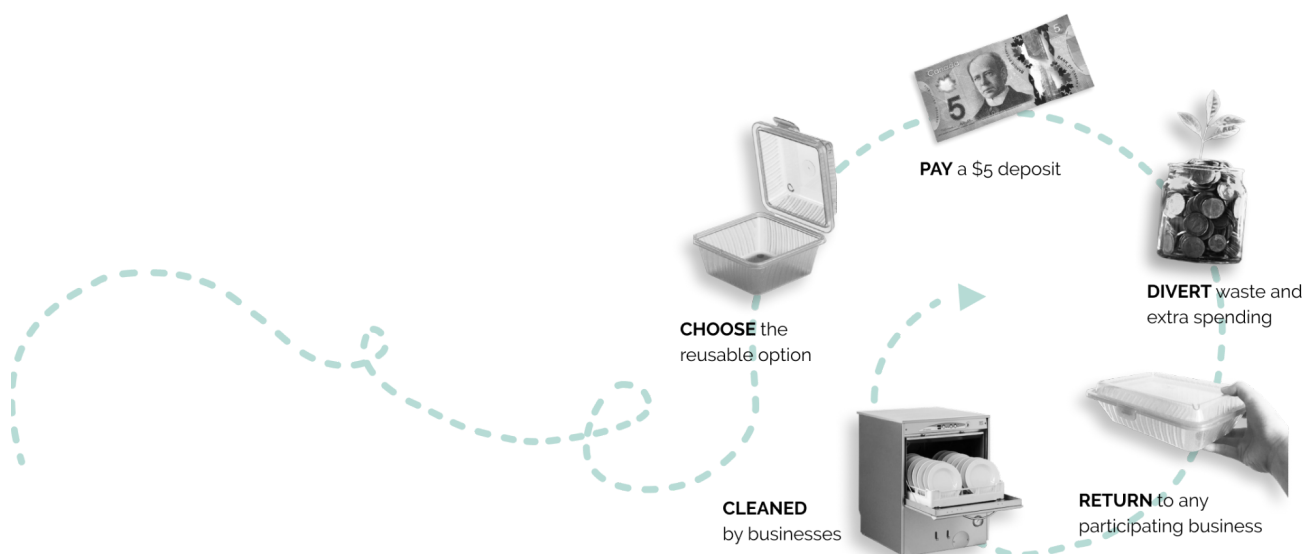


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1 Purpose

The future of takeaway is reusables. They are an essential part of addressing the plastic pollution crisis and mitigating the millions of tons of single-use waste that are disposed of in Canada every single year. Though some great momentum was seen towards reusables early on in 2020, the usage of single-use containers has increased dramatically with the onset of COVID-19. While this pandemic may seem like a barrier to sustainable practices, experts are saying reusables aren't any more dangerous than disposables with the right safety measures in place.

The aim of this document is to provide an overview of the health expert statement addressing the safety of reusables and to outline how to safely implement a reusable container program during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is applicable to all operators in the Food and Hospitality sector and should be used in addition to Alberta Food and Safety Guidelines



2 Health Expert Statement

The following section is a summary of a health statement signed by 119 health experts from 18 countries. According to this statement, reusable systems can be implemented safely by employing basic hygiene¹.

2.1 COVID-19 Spreads Primarily from Inhaling Aerosolized Droplets

It may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own nose/mouth/eyes. However, the main source of transmission is through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks in proximity to another person.

2.2 Disposable Products Present Similar Issues As Reusable Ones

Though contact through surfaces is not the primary source of transmission, the virus can last multiple days on any object or surface—reusable or disposable.

2.3 Reusables can be cleaned while disposables cannot

Since disposables cannot be cleaned, infected containers could cause additional health concerns once it is disposed of. On the other hand, reusables can be cleaned easily and most household disinfectants are effective.

For the full health expert statement, please [click here](https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-international-stateless/2020/07/0c3a6a32-health-expert-statement_updated.pdf).

¹https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-international-stateless/2020/07/0c3a6a32-health-expert-statement_updated.pdf

3 Program Requirements

The following are requirements needed from businesses and the containers in order to safely implement a reusable container program. Based on container requirements, a container recommendation is made along with its specifications.

3.1 Food Permit

In order for a business to be a part of the reusable container program, you must have a Food Permit. This means that your facility should have commercial-grade dishwashing capabilities (whether manual or by a dishwasher). If you do not have a food permit, you cannot be a part of the program at this moment. Once we confirm your participation in the program, we will notify AHS so that they can check each business's processes during your regular health inspection.

For more information about the Food Handling Permit in general, please [click here](#).

3.2 Container Requirements for Safety

- Should be food-grade (NSF certified) and designed to be reused
- Withstand high temperatures (71-82C) or chemical sanitizer (chlorine/iodine) and be safe to put in a commercial dishwasher
- Needs to be easy to wash and dry (not silicon or wood)
- Durable and shatterproof (not glass)

3.3 Container Recommendation (Chosen container specifications)

The containers I recommend are the [eco-takeouts by G.E.T](#)

- NSF certified and tested for over 1000 reuses
- Commercial dishwasher safe (high or low-temperature machines)
- Bleach-free detergents should be used
- 100% BPA-free non-toxic
- 100% recyclable made with plastic #5 (polypropylene)
- Microwave-safe for reheating food
- Break-resistant and leak-resistant
- Available in a variety of shapes and sizes
- Can be branded with a custom logo, design, or custom colour

For more information about G.E.T containers, please [click here](#).

4 Container Maintenance

With proper care and maintenance, the G.E.T containers are tested to last over 1000 cycles and can be recycled at the end of its life. Below are the procedures to ensure the containers can be used as long as possible while making sure it is safe to do so.

4.1 Dos and Don'ts for Hygiene/Care

	Do	Don't
Handling	● Handle with care ● Microwave in 1-minute intervals when reheating food	● Drop, strike, or throw ● Cook or thaw food
Cleaning	● Rinse as soon as possible ● For best results, soak for 10 minutes in bleach-free soap ● Use soft cloths or sponges to remove food	● Use scour pads, steel wool, or any kind of metal scrubbers ● Use bleach or bleach-based detergents or cleansers
Dishwashing	● Angle opened containers at 30° in a peg dish rack for thorough sanitation ● Ensure all detergent and chemicals used are bleach-free	● Overload the dishwasher ● Stack containers on top of each other in the dishwasher

4.2 End-of-life

Although the containers are designed to last for over 1000 cycles, there are some instances when they must be replaced earlier. It is important to ensure all damaged containers are taken out of the program and *RECYCLED*.

4.2.1 How to know when a container is at the end of its life

- The container is damaged (chipped, rough surface, cracked, flaking)
- The container is stained and unable to be cleaned

4.2.2 How to recycle & get replacement containers

- When a container has reached its end of life based on any of the above criteria, we ask that it is taken out of the program right away.
- Take note of the damaged container on the **recycling sheet**. When the sheet is filled or when there is time, submit information to the [recycling form](#). This is very important in ensuring there are enough containers circulating in the program.
- Put the container in a recycling bin for hard plastics. **The container is plastic #5**. If your business does not have a recycling bin, you can get in touch with the [Town of Banff](#) to get one set up. **Recycling by the town is now free of charge.**
- **For the pilot program**, volunteers will do an audit on the containers on an as-needed basis and bring new containers into the system.
- **In the long term**, the procedure for container replacement is not finalized. However, we think it makes the most sense for businesses to replace containers as a collective effort (divide the costs of containers leaving the system) with a % rebate from the town. The reason we think businesses should cover replacement is because if all goes well, businesses should be saving much more than the cost of the replacement.

4.2.3 How often are containers damaged or replaced?

- Around 10 percent of containers are lost on an annual basis. The costs associated with lost containers do not need to be taken into account because of deposit fees.
- Around 20 percent of containers are replaced due to wear/tear on an annual basis.

5 Day-to-Day Safety Protocol

The following are a set of best practices recommended by health experts to ensure front-line-workers and customers are safe as containers are used and returned on a daily basis. Step-by-step procedures have been created as separate documents for staff and customers.

5.1 Comply with food safety & health codes

Following the basic industry standard of washing and sanitizing provide more than adequate protection against the transmission of COVID-19 through container surfaces.

5.2 Comply with regular hygienic practices for COVID

Food establishments should always follow the guidance from the government of Alberta regarding COVID-19 safety. The bottom line is that the containers are safe for use after commercial-grade washing, all other procedures are additional precautions.

5.3 Try to employ contact-free systems & regular handwashing by employees

Systems in which there is no contact between the returned containers and retail surface areas provide a precautionary approach to addressing COVID-19 transmission. We are hoping to provide drop-off bins or trays to allow employees to transfer the container without contact.

5.4 Ensure that workers are protected

Additional steps to protect workers' safety include providing PPE, paid sick leave, reduced occupancy in stores, and requiring customers to practice social distancing/wear masks.

For the full health expert statement, please [click here](#).