

Access to Recycling of Post-Consumer Packaging in Canada

Is your packaging recyclable?

As extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes proliferate across North America, manufacturers and retailers of packaged food and consumer goods are facing new regulatory compliance challenges in determining how to manage their post-consumer packaging.

To increase the recovery of this material, more and more companies are beginning to affix eco-labels to their packaging. Although well intended, the proliferation of recycling-related labels has created confusion for consumers.




In the United States, this has led to the formation of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition® (SPC), an industry working group dedicated to supporting “packaging systems that encourage economic prosperity and a sustainable flow of materials.”

To solve the problem, the SPC has proposed a universal and standardized “How2Recycle” label. In addition to reducing confusion by creating a clear, harmonized message informing consumers on how to recycle a package after its use, the label enhances the reliability and transparency of manufacturers’ recyclability claims, and can increase the availability and quality of recycled material.

A major visual component of the How2Recycle label is the recyclability icon, which indicates the recyclability of the packaging component. The categories of ‘Widely Recycled’, ‘Limited Recycling’ and ‘Not Yet Recycled’ are based on the level of ‘Access’ the consumer has to recycling that material.

The new labeling system was soft-launched in 2012 with twelve companies from across the packaging supply chain. Having proved a success, it will likely expand to the more than 200 other companies that are part of the SPC. There is also a strong likelihood that the system will soon expand to Canada.

The How2Recycle Label

Level of Access	Label
60% of the population can recycle a material in a curbside or depot recycling system	 Widely Recycled
20-60% of the population has access to recycling the material	 Limited Recycling - Not Recycled in All Communities
Less than 20% of the population has access to recycling the material	 Not Yet Recycled

What does this mean for my business?

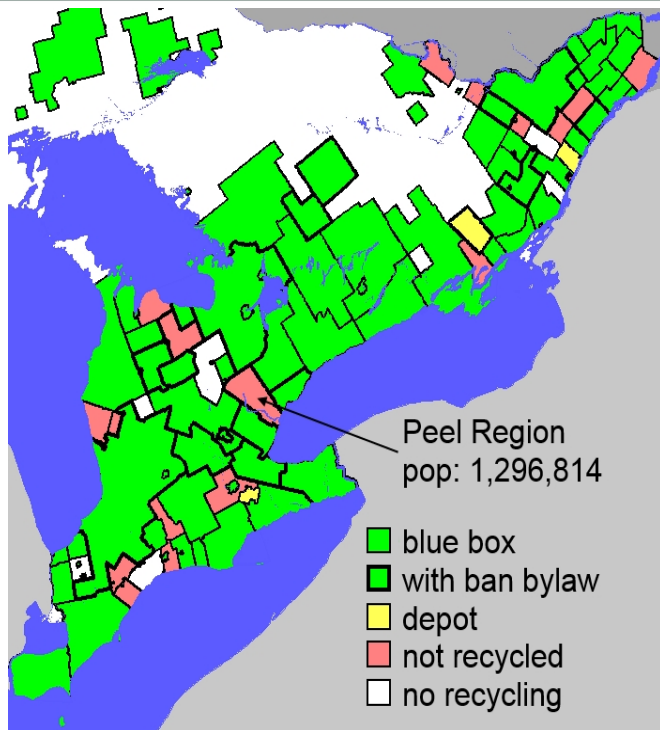
Knowing the percentage of Canadians that have access to recycling programs that accept your product’s packaging is critical. Identifying where and who has access to recycling is invaluable information as brandowners and suppliers consider packaging design and labeling.

Corporations and industry groups are working with municipalities and recycling companies to improve the availability of recycling programs for certain materials.

Every other year, CM Consulting conducts an extensive review of each Canadian recycling program and records the materials accepted in municipalities or regional districts in the country serving more than 5000 residents.

Using recent census data, CM Consulting is able to determine Provincial and National “Access” rates for recycling of post-consumer packaging. We then apply Geographic Information Systems to produce regional maps that show which areas are covered and not covered by recycling programs for each of 35 recyclable material types.

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Programs in Southern Ontario that accept rigid PET containers that are not bottles, jugs, or jars

Some Findings

- Since 2009, the national access rate for HDPE and LDPE film and bags has increased from 53% to over 60%.
- Disposal bans prohibit 76% of British Columbia residents from disposing recyclables in the garbage.
- In Newfoundland, over 95% of the population has access to recycling of beverage-bottle plastic, but only 51% have access to recycling a similar bottle containing food.
- Fifty-two percent of Ontarians have access to recycling programs that accept polystyrene lids from hot beverage containers.

Materials Covered

- Bottles, jugs and jars broken down into 7 individual resins (PET, HDPE, PVC, LDPE, PP, PS, Other)
- Non-Bottle rigid plastic broken down into 7 individual resins (PET, HDPE, PVC, LDPE, PP, PS, Other)
- HDPE & LDPE film and Bags
- Styrofoam food packaging
- Styrofoam protective packaging
- Large and small plastic tubs
- Bulky plastics
- Garden Plastic
- Plastic bottle caps
- Hot beverage cup lids
- Other un-numbered plastic
- Cardboard & Boxboard
- Newspaper
- Glossy paper
- Coated paper cups
- Other paper fibre products
- Aluminum cans
- Glass bottles and jars
- Steel containers
- Aluminum food trays



We prepare customized reports that cover the scope of a company's packaging materials for:

- ❖ Recycling Access rates to inform labeling and stewardship reporting.
- ❖ Data & maps with un-served areas to identify opportunities to increase recycling.

The dataset also keeps track of programs with food waste collection or bans on disposal of recyclables or compostables.