

# PPSReview

**Product & Packaging  
Stewardship Review**

**MANAGING WASTE RESPONSIBLY**

**An information service for municipal governments**

**Vol 6, Issue 6, September 2006**

## Coming soon to an Ontario liquor store near you—deposits!

When it came, it came quickly.

After years of lobbying, the Ontario Government has concluded that a deposit-return system is the way to increase recovery of empty wine and liquor bottles.

Ontario's premier ran the idea up the flagpole last week, and almost everyone fell in line to salute. Of course, most of those lining up had been there for some time.

**“The Brewers currently run an extremely successful deposit-return system for Ontario beer bottles. The infrastructure is already in place and the staff are experienced in depot operation and management. Whether the Brewers were to actually operate the system, or to contract it out to a third party, the consolidation of LCBO bottle return with the existing beer packaging return system offers the possibility of more efficiencies and “piggybacks” on existing traffic patterns and material marketing.”**

*Wine and Liquor Container  
Recovery: The 2002 Perspective*  
A Special Report by  
Product & Packaging  
Stewardship Review  
(see [www.productstewardship.org](http://www.productstewardship.org))

The environmental community and the municipalities had been pushing for a deposit-return system for years. Recently, the bottle makers came on board, as have the wineries. Last Tuesday, (September 5) they were joined by Ontario Environment Commissioner Gord Miller. A couple of days later, Premier Dalton McGuinty confirmed the Province was looking at such a system. Three days later he was at the Brewers' distribution centre in Brampton making an unusual Sunday policy announcement.

Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten had always played the “blue box is best” card when the issue has been raised in the past, but recent statements had left her room to move if that was the route the Province took.

The new deposit system, to become a reality next February, would see empties returned to beer stores where a system to manage beer containers has been in place for years, with recovery rates in the high 90s.

Details of the rate structure are not yet available but a backgrounder from the Premier's Office said it will be “comparable to other jurisdictions in Canada,” where deposits range from 5 cents to 40 cents.

Ontario, Manitoba and Quebec are the only provinces in Canada that do not have deposit-return systems liquor and wine bottles, relying on their blue box systems to collect the empties. While the system has proved effective for newspaper recovery, the blue box is a poor second to deposit systems for the

recovery of beverage containers.

Over the years, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) has fought the idea of deposit-return tooth and nail. It says it has no room for the returned empties and there are concerns about increased prices at the checkout.

Initially, the LCBO rejected arguments suggesting other provinces in Canada (with deposit systems) enjoy higher recovery rates, despite clear evidence that this was the case. In recent months the LCBO has spent a lot of time, money and political capital promoting a switch from glass bottles to aseptic cartons (Tetra Paks), which Environment Commissioner Miller told a legislative committee have a recovery rate of less than 25% (*recent figures suggested the number is closer to 13% - editor*).

With yesterday's announcement, the LCBO, to use Premier Dalton McGuinty's words, has been “dragged kicking and screaming out of the dark ages.”

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# Briefly...

## CHINESE WANT "GREENER" COMPUTERS

According a Greenpeace survey, UK consumers would be willing to pay up to an extra US\$120 and Chinese consumers an extra \$200 for a personal computer (PC) containing fewer chemicals. BBC Online reports that people also agree manufacturers should take responsibility for the disposal of old machines, the research shows.

The study by Ipsos-Mori, which covered nine countries, coincides with an announcement by PC maker Dell to phase out a number of toxic chemicals in its products.

*Resource Recovery Forum, June 26, 2006*

*www.resourcesnotwaste.org*

## EPEAT TO HELP COMPUTER CHOICE

The Portland, Oregon-based Green Electronics Council has named more than 60 desktop computers, laptops and monitors from three manufacturers as meeting high performance, environmentally friendly computer equipment standards. The Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) helps purchasers rank computer desktops, laptops and monitors based on their environmental attributes. EPEAT was developed over a three-year period in an extensive consensus-based, EPA-funded process that included more than 100 representatives from environmental groups, government officials, large volume computer purchasers, subject matter experts, electronics recyclers and manufacturers. All of the products that meet the new EPEAT "green" computer standard are listed online in the EPEAT database ([www.epeat.net](http://www.epeat.net)).

*Green Electronics Council, July 24, 2006*

*www.greenelectronicscouncil.org*

## ECO-FRIENDLY COFFEE CUPS

International Paper (Memphis, Tennessee) and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc. (Waterbury, Vermont) have launched what the companies call an eco-friendly coffee cup. Instead of the petroleum-based plastic that is commonly found in coffee cups, the new cups use a corn-based "bio-plastic" liner to prevent leaking. The cup, which has been tested for more than a year, breaks down into water, carbon dioxide and organic matter after use under proper conditions,

Green Mountain Coffee says. The cup is available nationwide. The company claims converting to the new design will mean almost a quarter of a million pounds less of nonrenewable petrochemical materials every year. (*Of course, refillable mugs would be even better—editor.*)

*www.GreenMountainCoffee.com*

*July 12, 2006.*

## ...MEANWHILE, IN NEW YORK

The New York-based Biodegradable Products Institute has granted the first use of its logo for a coated paper cup that is designed to biodegrade quickly and completely.

Cereplast Inc. produces a proprietary bio-resin that can replace petroleum-based resins used for coating paper. The coated paper resists heat up to 220°F, which will allow manufacturers to produce a biodegradable cup capable of holding hot liquids. MeadWestvaco Corp. will use the bio-resin coating in laminated cups it makes for Solo Cup Co. The cups will break down in commercial and municipal composting operations. Solo initially will target cafeterias and food service operations that divert their organic waste to composting facilities.

*The Biodegradable Products Institute, August 7, 2006*

*www.bpiworld.org*

## .....AND IN JAPAN

Japan's Mos Burger chain is stopping the use of plastic take-out bags and introducing transparent corn-based takeout drink cups at all stores. According to Japan for Sustainability, this is the first major fast-food restaurant chain in Japan to introduce biodegradable drink cups at all its stores. The company expects that the use of such containers will reduce around 130 tons a year of consumption of plastic raw materials, and abandoning plastic bags will reduce oil consumption by about 1,760 barrels a year, based on the company's use of plastic products in 2005. In addition, the company has introduced paper takeout bags and reviewed its use of package materials.

*Resource Recovery Forum, July 26, 2006*

*www.resourcesnotwaste.org*

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Anyone wishing to support the Fair Comment Project may email Ben Bennett ([bbc@albedo.net](mailto:bbc@albedo.net)). Confidentiality is guaranteed.

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BASE FUNDING PLUS BONUSES SUGGESTED

# Final blue box best practices session set for London, September 29

The last of four consultation sessions on Ontario municipal best practices and how they should be applied to blue box funding decisions will be held at the Four Points by Sheraton in London, Friday, September 29.

Last Thursday, (September 7), the third session was held in Toronto, with about 40

participants attending. Earlier this summer, sessions were held in Ottawa and Sudbury.

Organized by the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators as part of an Efficiency and Effectiveness Fund initiative, the sessions have been designed to provide an opportunity for municipal program operators to share their expertise and experience in order to help shape a fair and effective payment system.

The format for each session has been adjusted to account for information and points raised at previous sessions.

The input from these sessions has suggested among the best practices with the broadest support are regulatory measures such as bag limits, user pay and bans on recyclables in the waste stream.

There has been strong agreement that all programs should have some level of promotion and education, ongoing program evaluation, and waste audits to track progress.

In the area of performance indicators by which programs could be judged, diversion was placed at the top.

While cost is recognized as an important yardstick, the variety of program types, geography, density and local conditions present some challenges. Programs in Northern Ontario, for example, face special issues which need to be taken into account.

At the Toronto session the discussion moved toward how the

payments to municipalities should be applied, which raised several questions.

Should the payments be on a per-tonne basis or a percentage of the cost? Most, but not all, preferred to be paid per tonne.

Should there be a base funding amount to all programs with “bonuses”

added for those who adopt accepted best practices (known as the Practices for Effective & Efficient

Recycling—PEER system)? This concept was widely supported in Toronto but organizers took pains to stress this is just one idea and other methods of payment may be preferred (although none was suggested in Toronto).

Increasing recovery will also increase the payments received from

stewards. With no increase in recovery, and thus all the money coming from the same pot, the individual “bonus” payments would have to be reduced as more programs qualify.

How much of the money collected from stewards should be used for the base funding?

Some argued a low base level would provide an incentive to programs to improve their efficiencies by adopting best practices in order to qualify for the extra funding. Others feared a low base would jeopardize some programs and be a threat to the stability of the blue box program.

Conversely, if the base funding were too high there would be little incentive for improvement.

If there were to be a base funding level, most municipalities felt it should be between 60% and 80%.

Information about the London best practices session is available at the AMRC website ([www.amrc.ca](http://www.amrc.ca)).

**If there were to be a base funding level, most municipalities felt it should be between 60% and 80%**

## September 21 deadline for BC Product Care consultation

The British Columbia-based Product Care Association (PCA) is looking for comment from all stakeholders on its product stewardship programs. Its consultation document can be downloaded from its website ([www.productcare.org](http://www.productcare.org)).

PCA operates a province-wide program under the Recycling Regulation that collects and manages leftover household paint, flammables and solvents, domestic pesticides and gasoline.

The October 2004 Recycling Regulation requires that Product Care’s existing stewardship plans be revised and re-filed by October 2006.

Once the consultation is complete, responses will be summarized by topic and then posted on the Product Care

website and distributed by e-mail to participants. Taking into account the responses received, Product Care will then proceed with the filing of its program plans with the BC Ministry of Environment as required by the Recycling Regulation.

The consultation period ends September 21, 2006.

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# Plastax idea prompts quick industry response and other suggestions

Canada's plastics industry has jumped all over a faint-hope resolution from a couple of municipal councillors for a plastic bag tax in British Columbia. And has ruffled some feathers in the process. (See below, right.)

"Watch for the fireworks this fall," warned the Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA) in an August 1 media release.

CPIA was referring to the October 23-27 annual conference of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM), to be held at the Victoria Convention Centre.

Among dozens of resolutions up for discussion at the event is a motion calling on the Province to levy a 25-cent tax on plastic bags, similar to that imposed in Ireland a few years back.

Municipal and regional officials in the lower BC mainland discussed the idea in May. North Vancouver municipal council, which led the discussions, forwarded resolutions to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and to the UBCM.

CPIA said in its news release that it is "gearing up" to fight the proposal by launching what it calls a consumer information "myth busting" campaign and by challenging the tax proponents to a public debate in Vancouver prior to the vote.

CPIA said the Irish bag tax has been "a failure, creating problems for consumers, retailers and ironically, the environment."

According to CPIA, Irish consumers have responded to the tax by switching to other types of bags, particularly paper bags and heavier "kitchen catcher" bags, to carry their groceries.

While the number of plastic shopping bags has declined by 90% over the past four years, the sale of heavier plastic bags has gone up 400% and the overall amount of plastic resin used in Ireland has actually increased 10%, said CPIA.

Retailers in Ireland are providing

paper bags instead, which it said is "a step backwards for the environment."

CPIA says the manufacture of a paper grocery bag is twice as energy intensive as that of a plastic bag, and that paper bags have 80 % more impact on the environment in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. This prompted a speedy retort from the paper industry, which says the plastics studies are not making a fair comparison.

The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors has also joined the anti-tax campaign. It has written to municipal councils urging them to look at the issue more closely before voting in October.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) will consider another approach to the issue. On September 13, the GVRD Waste Management Committee is scheduled to discuss the idea of an industry-run extended producer responsibility (EPR) program

for plastic *and* paper single-use bags. This would be in keeping with an ongoing trend toward industry-operated programs.

A GVRD staff report notes an EPR program would be "economically efficient and create incentives to redesign the bags and strengthen recycling markets." It would require a change in the Province's recycling regulation but "would likely be faster than developing an administration program for a new tax."

The UBCM Resolutions Committee also has some doubts about the tax idea.

It notes that a tax "may not correspond with the Province's shift to industry regulation of end of life product management."

It notes it may be advisable to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the Plastax initiative at the executive level prior to requesting the imposition of a provincial and/or federal tax.

## Don't knock paper; litter is the issue—PPEC

John Mullinder said the paper industry "is upset" that the plastic industry is putting down paper in its campaign against the proposed BC plastic bag tax.

"Frankly, this seems to be more of a litter issue than anything else and should be tackled on that basis," said Mr. Mullinder, executive director of the Paper & Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC).

"For a national plastic association to claim that paper grocery bags are 'a step backward for the environment' and to quote selectively from so-called life cycle analysis (LCA) studies is both unfortunate and unhelpful," he said.

Mr. Mullinder said LCAs are intended as internal monitoring and continuous improvement tools, and

shouldn't be used "inappropriately by competing industries or by governments," because widely varying assumptions and averages make apples-to-apples comparisons very difficult.

He said paper bags in Canada are made from renewable resources whereas plastics are derived from non-renewable fossil fuels."

"The real issue in BC and elsewhere, seems to be litter."

## EEQ communications report available

The Eco Entreprises Quebec (EEQ) report on communications and company consultations related to the 2005 and 2006 fees has been posted on the EEQ website.

EEQ's Board of Directors adopted fee schedules on June 26 covering businesses that market "containers and packaging" and "printed material".

The document has been sent to Recyc-Quebec for a full analysis and recommendation to the provincial government.

The report and the fee schedules can be found at [www.ecoentreprises.qc.ca/ANGLAIS/accueil.html](http://www.ecoentreprises.qc.ca/ANGLAIS/accueil.html).

## Vancouver to host 2007 Canadian Stewardship Conference

A one-day Conference on Canadian Stewardship will be held in Vancouver, September 14, 2007. A briefing via webcast is being organized for this fall, and will be held October 12.

The featured speakers include Bill Ring, chief operating officer of the Resource Recovery Fund Board in Nova Scotia; Robert Lemieux, president of Recyc-Quebec; Chris Benedetti, vice-president of the Sussex Strategy Group; Christina Seidel, executive director of the Recycling Council of Alberta, and Dan Wong, chair of Encorp Pacific.

Participants in the webcast are required to register ahead of time. (Follow the links from [www.canadianstewardship.com](http://www.canadianstewardship.com)).

Participants will view slides and hear the presenter over the internet. A question period for each speaker will follow with questions emailed to a moderator.

Last year's stewardship conference, held in Toronto, attracted more than 180 participants.

The conference is being organized by Mark McKenney - ([mckenney@xplornet.com](mailto:mckenney@xplornet.com)) or (250) 446-2322.

## MPSC annual report due this month

The Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation's annual report is expected to be available this month (September 2006).

In its August bulletin, MPSC notes material recovery has increased for the 11th consecutive year (up 3.4% overall), more than \$7.3 million was paid out in recycling support to municipalities and close to 67,000 tonnes of material collected for recycling.

More information is available at [www.mpsc.ca](http://www.mpsc.ca).

## COMING EVENTS

### September 13-15

The Composting Council of Canada 16th Annual National Conference,  
"The Possibilities Are Endless..Compost!"  
Hamilton, ON  
416-535-0240  
[www.compost.org](http://www.compost.org)

### September 20-22

Recycling Council of Alberta conference:  
"Back To The Future"  
Edmonton, AB  
(403) 843-6563  
[www.recycle.ab.ca](http://www.recycle.ab.ca)

### September 25-27

Ontario Good Roads Association Snow School  
Orangeville, ON  
[www.ogra.org](http://www.ogra.org)

### September 29

AMRC Best Practices Consultation Session  
London, ON  
(519) 823-1990  
[www.amrc.ca](http://www.amrc.ca)

### October 1- 4

AMO 2006 Counties, Regions and Single-Tier Municipalities Conference  
Haliburton, ON  
(416) 791-9856  
[www.amo.on.ca](http://www.amo.on.ca)

### October 16-22

Waste Reduction Week in Canada  
(416) 657-2797  
[www.rco.on.ca](http://www.rco.on.ca)

### October 23-27

Union of British Columbia Municipalities Convention,  
Victoria, BC  
[www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca)

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# Opinion Piece

*The opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of PPSReview*

## How the mighty have fallen and the arrogant have been chastened

By Jay Arthur

Well, I've said it before and I'll say it again. Knock me down with a feather!

Deposits at the LCBO. Good heavens, what next? You can almost hear the panic in the boardrooms at Coke and Pepsi, although it's almost drowned out by the singing and dancing in the streets by the recycling plant operators and the paper mills.

I'm sure a lot of people were amazed not just by the Premier's announcement but by the speed with which it happened.

Imagine that you are an executive with, say, oh, how about the LCBO? You take a week off fishing to enjoy the calm after the kids go back to school. You drive back to Toronto Sunday night, switch on the television and there's the Premier.

What's he doing surrounded by cases of beer? you ask yourself. And on a Sunday, too. There goes the churchgoers' vote.

You turn up the volume. Then you notice the urgent flashing light on your answering machine and you are afraid to check your email.

Meanwhile, back in the Beer Store's distribution warehouse in Brampton, there was Premier McGuinty, surrounded by a suitable throng of stakeholders, telling us that there is indeed a Santa Claus, and the wicked witch is dead.

I've got to tell you; I'm still pinching myself.

How could this happen?

After all, the logic behind deposits has been there for ages. No one whose head was not in the clouds (or anywhere else for that matter) could deny that they mean increased recovery and better

quality empties. The LCBO, however, has been in denial for the entire time.

I suppose if you are bringing in a billion-dollar profit people tend to leave you alone when it comes to other matters. And if you have a former Tory big shot in charge, that can't hurt either.

But times change.

The 362.88-kilo gorilla known to his friends as Borderclosing has been sitting in on cabinet meetings for some time, trying to get some attention. Well,

**"You can almost hear the panic in the boardrooms at Coke and Pepsi, although it's almost drowned out by the singing and dancing in the streets by the recycling plant operators and paper mills."**

he got that attention last month and all of a sudden the Province's targets took on a new perspective—not the 60% diversion by 2008 target — the 0% waste to Michigan by 2010 target.

And let's not forget that cardinal sin among the mighty—arrogance.

With a virtual free hand to run the show how it wanted, and with no competition, the LCBO has been strutting around like it owned the joint. In theory, *we* own the joint (I for one have made a heavy investment), but you'd never know it. The place has been run like a private old boys' club.

And with the support of our good friends at CSR, the LCBO has been propping up the blue box with impressive payments that look good on paper but don't come close to covering the one half of real cost of carrying wine and liquor containers recovered that the legislation intends.

As the changes in collection methods led to lower and lower glass quality and more contamination issues, the answer was to throw money at

research to find alternative markets to the aggregate substitute uses (euphemistically termed "recycling") for uses that are a little less obviously *not* recycling. And all the time, a perfect market had existed and continues to exist, but it requires a better quality recovered product. No research is required, and there is no better use of the material than to make new containers. That is what recycling is supposed to be.

And to add insult to injury, the blinkered promoters of the curbside system for collecting glass like this have played key roles in determining "efficiency".

If you look at who was standing behind the Premier and who has been supporting the call for deposits, you'll find some folks who have crossed the floor, so to speak.

The bottle makers and the wineries were always calling the blue box tune but they have changed their stance.

The LCBO's misguided and very public embracing of alternative packaging is fooling no one, however much it may keep playing the enviro card. And by bullying the wine makers and turning their backs on the bottle makers, the liquor store mandarins have only helped the cause of the deposit lobby.

You might call it a fiasco—if you'll pardon the allusion to glass.

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