



# BC EPR OVERVIEW

## An Introduction to Extended Producer Responsibility in BC

**ISSUE:** Who should bear the more than \$250 million cost that local governments incur annually to manage the solid waste produced in BC? Should it be the municipal taxpayer, or those who produce and use the consumer goods that are the primary source of that waste? Is it more cost-effective to landfill whatever waste we generate, or can recovering and recycling commodities help restructure our system into a closed-loop, sustainable economy in which waste is the exception and not the rule? And what about tomorrow? Do we identify potentially hazardous waste now and deal with it in an effective and proactive manner, or we leave coming generations potential environmental time bombs set to contaminate their future? Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs maybe the answer to all those questions.

**BACKGROUND:** The concept of EPR is based on the principle that suppliers, importers, first-sellers, brand-owners, retailers, manufacturers, and consumers share the responsibility to minimize environmental impact in a system that manages the life cycle of the products they make, sell and use. Industry managed EPR programs are gaining acceptance throughout the world.

B.C. currently leads North America in its approach to EPR through Product Stewardship Program Regulations. In 1970, B.C. became the first jurisdiction in North America to establish a mandatory deposit-refund system for soft drink and beer containers. Government programs became active in 1991 for lead-acid batteries and scrap tires. Then in 1994 B.C.'s first true EPR program was created through the Post-Consumer Paint Stewardship Program Regulation. Three years later, the Post-Consumer Residual Stewardship Program Regulation was established, initially covering solvents, flammable liquids, pesticides, gasoline and medications. In June 2003, B.C. consumers saw a revamped used oil program, including oil filters & containers, to become the latest product of an EPR. In 2006 the province launched a modification of the Recycling Regulation for e-waste, such as TV's & Computers & printers (Phase 1).

Phase 2 of the e-waste product category included audio-visual & consumer equipment, thermostats, cell phones, residential fluorescent lamps & batteries, launched mid 2010. Phase 3 began in April 2011 and included smoke detectors and batteries. Anti-freeze was added in July 2011. Phase 4 was launched in October 1st, 2011, while the 5th and final Phase will be launched July 1st, 2012. Public consultations will be held for the upcoming printed-paper & packaging (PPP) EPR, Phase 5 e-waste, such as large appliances, and issues concerning the beverage container category, such as deposit=refund levels, retail collection requirements etc.

In 2003 B.C.'s Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, (Ministry of the Environment) moved to streamline its EPR regulatory structure. According to its web site, the ministry favoured a single comprehensive, results-based regulation to cover producer operated product stewardship programs. They chose the objective-based Post-Consumer Residual Stewardship Program Regulation as the most suitable to model. As part of that process, the Post-Consumer Paint Stewardship Program Regulation and the Residual Stewardship Program Regulations were repealed in 2003 and 2004 respectively. Both were replaced in 2004 with new EPR legislation called simply, Recycling Regulation. All future regulated stewardship products will eventually be added to existing schedules or as new schedule categories under this law.

**CURRENT PRACTICES:** More than forty years after the first product management laws were enacted, EPR in B.C. has developed into a system that diverts many end-of-use products into a collection, recovery and management system designed to deal with the specifics of that product. For the majority of regulated products, the related programs are managed by industry stewardship associations based on a stewardship plan submitted to and approved by the Ministry of the Environment.

Funding is either generated through advance disposal fees paid at point of retail, as in the case of paint, or as part of the price of the product, as in the case of gasoline. The stewardship organizations track program activity, measure the results against the established objectives within their approved plan, and then report those results annually to Ministry. Every five years the producer must review the approved plan and submit any amendments if applicable or advise the director in writing that the approved plan does not require changes.

### **Future Direction:**

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Council of Ministers (CCME) approved a Canada-wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility and a Canada-wide Strategy for Sustainable Packaging. A CCME's Extended Producer Responsibility Task Group was established to provide guidance on the development and implementation of EPR and product stewardship programs, and to consider packaging as a first priority. The plan also provides a harmonized set of principles for EPR in Canada and outlines a schedule of products to be included in future EPR programs.

### **What you can do:**

Stakeholders, such as consumers, retailers, environmentalists, governments, producers, recyclers & regional districts are all represented within RCBC. Individuals & groups have purchasing power, can write to responsible parties, can raise issues during election campaigns

and can vote accordingly, and/or join with others to share information and put forward a stronger voice and position on issues.

Since its inception almost 40 years ago, the Recycling Council has worked to solve complex environmental issues by providing the diverse groups concerned with waste reduction a constructive and respectful forum for discussion. A perfect example is the “Printed Paper & Packaging” discussion on the new online platform “Placespeak” . Stakeholders can sign up for this issue and participate by answering questions & taking polls, as well as checking back periodically to receive updates & changes.

You can also ensure you keep up with the latest developments and have your voice heard by joining RCBC. You will receive the latest RCBC publications that explore these issues and more.

### **For more information:**

1. MoE: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/recycling/history/index.htm#anr>
2. RCBC: <http://rcbc.bc.ca/education/product-stewardship>
3. Placespeak: <http://www.placespeak.com/rcbc>
4. Blog: <http://www.stewardshipbc.wordpress.com>
5. Service Plan: <http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2010/sp/pdf/ministry/env.pdf>
6. Canada-Wide Action Plan: [http://www.ccme.ca/assets/pdf/epr\\_cap.pdf](http://www.ccme.ca/assets/pdf/epr_cap.pdf)

### **Or Call:**

RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604 732-9253 or 1-800-667-4321 or visit [www.rcbc.bc.ca](http://www.rcbc.bc.ca) to use the “Recyclepedia” available on the front page for residential or business waste questions.

### **RCBC Mission Statement**

The Recycling Council of British Columbia (RCBC) is a multi-sectoral, non-profit organization promoting the principles of Zero Waste through information services, the exchange of ideas and research.

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