



PPEC Factsheet

Virtually 100% of Canadians can now recycle paper boxes, bags, and cartons

Canadians can no longer say they'd love to recycle their old paper boxes but can't do it where they live.

That's because virtually all Canadians now have access to the convenient recycling of corrugated boxes, paperboard or boxboard cartons, and kraft paper bags. The actual access numbers, calculated by independent consulting firm, CM Consulting, are 96% for corrugated and kraft paper and 94% for boxboard. The numbers update an earlier paper industry study that placed access numbers in the 83% to 85% range.

"What this means," says John Mullinder, who heads up the paper packaging industry's environmental council, PPEC, "is that Canadians no longer have any excuses for placing paper boxes in the garbage. They don't belong there, and besides, we need them to make new boxes." Most of the new boxes manufactured in Canada, he says, are made from 100% recycled material that's been collected from the back of factories or supermarkets or from curbside or depot programs.

About 40 years ago the only paper packaging collected for recycling in Canada was the old corrugated boxes that had been used to deliver supplies to factories and supermarkets. When the supply of these boxes tightened up, the recycling mills started to look for additional sources of paper fibre, which led them to lobby municipalities to add the collection of old corrugated containers (or OCC) from households. Then in the early 1990s, PPEC and a select group of customers led North America in the further recycling of old boxboard (the common cereal or shoe box). This is normally 100% recycled content as well, and can be blended in with old corrugated boxes to make new paper packaging.

"While we have used old corrugated to make new boxes for years," says Mullinder, "we are particularly proud of our efforts to divert old boxboard from landfill. Within a relatively short timeframe we've gone from zero public access to its recycling in one province (Ontario) to almost 100% access nationally."

What the industry really wants now, he adds, is for Canadians to make sure that they take full advantage of their recycling opportunities. "We need that material to make new boxes. It should not go to waste."