

Pioneering the recycling of old boxboard cartons



The Canadian paper box industry relies heavily on recycled materials to make the boxes its customers use to deliver their various products. Six of the eight major boxboard mill sites across the country produce 100% recycled content board. One uses a blend of virgin and recycled fibre, and one uses 100% virgin material, reducing the overall industry average to 73% [recycled content](#). This is still a very impressive number. Used boxes for further recycling are mostly collected from homes (the Blue Box). But other used paper fibres are frequently thrown into the mix as well: old printing and writing paper from offices, old corrugated boxes from both industrial and residential sources, and old newspapers.

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In the early 1990s, most boxboard cartons (cereal, shoe boxes) headed straight to landfill after use. The industry's environmental council (PPEC) and some key customers decided, however, to see if this mostly 100% recycled content fibre could be used yet again. No one in North America had done this before.

PPEC coordinated trials with several Ontario municipalities and mills, and tested the resulting board to ensure it met customer and health specifications. In most cases, the old boxboard (OBB) was blended in with old corrugated containers (OCC) to make new corrugated boxes. As the mills and customers became more comfortable with this new source of fibre, additional municipalities, including Toronto, were encouraged to join the recycling effort. Word spread, and before too long, municipalities outside Ontario also added old boxboard to their household paper collection list.



Today, some 20 years later, [almost 100% \(94%\)](#) of Canadians can recycle their old cereal or shoe boxes, a major achievement of which the industry is justifiably proud.