



Most paper packaging is recyclable and/or compostable

Most paper packaging is recyclable. The few exceptions are generally where wax or non-paper materials have been added to the paper so that the container can perform its particular packaging function — delivering a product in optimum condition to the consumer.

The challenge of recycling waxed boxes is outlined in a separate *Factsheet* on the PPEC website. And through hydropulping, it is possible to separate the aluminum and polyethylene from composite packaging so that the paper fibres can be used again (predominantly in tissue and toweling products).

While most paper products are recyclable, sometimes they end up just too far away from a recycling mill for recycling to be economically worthwhile.

For example, there are limited or no suitable recycling facilities in the Atlantic or Prairie provinces for the recycling of some used paper packaging. Even rural communities in provinces where there are recycling mills are concerned about the costs of shipping generally low-value used paper long distances for minimal economic benefit.

Recognizing this fact, and that paper (cellulose) materials provide a good carbon source, PPEC began investigating the composting alternative back in 1991. A world literature search revealed no previous published information on this topic so PPEC hired the Macdonald College campus of McGill University in Montreal to do some trials using waxed corrugated and old boxboard.

The trials were very successful. Waxed corrugated could indeed produce good compost. Three of the seven samples tested met Ontario guidelines for unrestricted use; another three qualified for restricted use. The college suggested these could be a valuable media for ornamental and other non-edible plant species. A subsequent and far bigger trial at a commercial composting facility in Ontario in 1992 revealed no problems at all with waxed corrugated.

Today, Prince Edward Island composts all its old boxboard cartons and Nova Scotia sends more old boxboard to composting than to recycling. PPEC is encouraging composting as an option for the Prairies.