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— *At least 80% of Canadians can now recycle boxes and cartons* —

(7 April, 2009) Over 80% of Canadians now have access to the recycling of common corrugated boxes and boxboard cartons, according to a report by paper industry association, the Paper & Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC).

“What this means,” says PPEC executive director, John Mullinder, “ is that brandowners marketing nationally in corrugated or boxboard packaging can have the word “recyclable” printed on their packaging without having to add any qualifying statements or listing specific municipalities by name where the materials can be put out for recycling.

“Apart from being expensive,” he said, “having to add such qualifying details is a real pain, because you first have to track what thousands of individual municipalities offer in the way of collection and then somehow encapsulate that in writing on the box. We wanted to avoid all that and make it easier for our customers.”

The Canadian guidelines on claiming recyclability have recently been significantly strengthened, added PPEC senior policy advisor, Craig Gammie, who coordinated the study. To claim recyclability without qualification, at least 50% of the residents in the marketplace in which the packaging ends up, have to have access to recycling. It used to be 33 per cent.

What PPEC found, said Gammie, is that at least 83% of Canadians now have access to boxboard recycling. This was especially gratifying considering PPEC was the North American pioneer of the further recycling of boxboard (which is already mostly 100% recycled content) back in the early 1990s. “Now we’re over 80 per cent nationally, although we have to qualify any “recyclable” claims in the far north and east, partly because composting of paper materials is a more widely practiced municipal option.”

As for corrugated, the most widely recovered of any paper material in Canada, at least 85% of Canadians now have access to recycling, said Gammie. But a brandowner selling only in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, or Nunavut would have to qualify their claim.

Gammie said the data-gathering process had been rather tricky and time-consuming and underscored the urgent need for consistent and accurate data. In some provinces, the data was readily available and verifiable, he said. In others, PPEC had to rely on information from the largest municipalities.

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For more details contact:
Craig Gammie
Senior Policy Advisor, PPEC
(905) 458-0087
ppec@ppec-paper.com