



## Over 80% Access To Recycling for Corrugated and Boxboard

### Executive Summary:

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. 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 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. But a brandowner selling only in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, or Nunavut would have to qualify their claim.

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. In others, PPEC had to rely on information from the largest municipalities.

## Recyclability Claims (Canada)

The Canadian Standards Association and the Competition Bureau of Canada recently strengthened the guidelines for recyclability claims (*PLUS 14021 - Environmental claims: A guide for industry and advertisers*). These depend on Canadians' access to recycling and where the packaging ends up.

There are two types of “recyclable” claims that can be made – unqualified and qualified.

- (1) The unqualified claim means you can use the word “Recyclable” by itself or the word “Recyclable” with a mobius loop symbol as long as at least 50% of the residents in the marketplace in which the packaging ends up have access to recycling (it used to be 33%).

PPEC has established that common boxboard and corrugated packaging easily meet that 50% threshold nationally. However, if a brandowner is marketing a product only in the far north or in the east, the brandowner may have to “qualify” their recyclable claim.

(2) Qualified Claims

A brandowner can still claim recyclability if access to the recycling of that packaging falls below the new 50% threshold. But he/she must qualify the claim by listing by name (on the box or carton), the municipalities or municipal groupings or geographic regions where that specific packaging can actually be recycled or provide a generalized qualification that conveys the limited availability of collection facilities (e.g. “This container may not be recyclable in your area”).

**Important Note:** PPEC’s research applies only to “common” corrugated boxes and boxboard cartons. It does not apply to paper packaging that has had other materials added (i.e. aseptics, gabletops, and laminated packaging with plastic and/or metal).

<b>PPEC’s Access Summary (April 2009)</b>	<b>Boxboard</b>	<b>Corrugated</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>&gt;83%</b>	<b>&gt;84%</b>
<b><u>East</u></b>	<b>&gt;57%</b>	<b>&gt;82%</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	>33%	>43%
Prince Edward Island	0%	100%
Nova Scotia	55%	98%
New Brunswick	>86%	>86%
<b><u>Ont./Que.</u></b>	<b>&gt;93%</b>	<b>&gt;92%</b>
Quebec	>85%	>85%
Ontario	98%	97%
<b><u>West</u></b>	<b>&gt;69%</b>	<b>&gt;69%</b>
Manitoba	>85%	>85%
Saskatchewan	>61%	>61%
Alberta	>66%	>66%
British Columbia	>69%	>69%
<b><u>North</u></b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42%</b>
Yukon	82%	82%
Northwest Territories	44%	44%
Nunavut	0%	0%

## **Study Conclusions**

- Unqualified claims for recyclability of common corrugated boxes and boxboard cartons in Canada are supported nationally (i.e. meet the 50% threshold).
- Unqualified claims are not supportable for common corrugated in Nfld/Labrador, NWT, or Nunavut.
- Unqualified claims are not supportable for common boxboard in Nfld/Labrador, NWT, Nunavut, PEI plus a caution in NS (because of composting).