



## **Key Facts on Glass Recycling in Ontario**

**Ontarians have been increasing the amount of food and beverage glass they recycle through the Blue Box every year for the past six years.**

The data below are from Waste Diversion Ontario's (WDO) Municipal Datacall [1], which is a compilation of tonnage statistics submitted annually by Ontario municipal recycling programs, and from Stewardship Ontario's municipal waste composition audits [2], 2004.

- About 198,000 tonnes of glass bottles and jars were introduced into the Ontario marketplace in 2004; of that 120,000 tonnes were recovered through municipal recycling programs, an increase of more than 5,000 tonnes over 2003.
- Glass recycling in Ontario has grown by between 4,000 and 5,000 tonnes in each of the previous four years (1998 – 2002).
- The amount of clear or "flint" glass recovered in recycling programs and delivered to the "bottle-to-bottle" container market increased last year to 27,100 tonnes from 25,900 tonnes the previous year.

**The increase in "single-stream" and "commingling" Blue Box collection and processing does NOT render glass un-recyclable. The evidence, as stated above, is that the amount of glass recycled has increased in the past five years.**

- Many Ontario municipalities have shifted their recycling collection and processing operations to a system called "commingling," which means that Blue Box materials are collected together in "two streams" (all containers in one compartment; all paper fibres in another) or a "single stream" (all recyclables go into one compartment in the truck). Similarly, many municipalities no longer undertake the labour-intensive job of sorting glass by colour at their local recycling processing facility. Rather, they ship their mixed coloured glass to more automated processing facilities where glass can be sorted by colour in preparation for marketing to companies producing glass bottles, fibreglass and other value-added glass products.
- The key benefit of commingling is that it reduces the cost of municipal recycling collection services.
- One of the reasons municipalities made the decision to reduce the colour sorting of glass is because the market for green glass collapsed in Ontario in 2000 when the former Consumers Glass (subsequently purchased by OI), made a business decision to shut down its green bottle production. To our knowledge, there is no production of green glass bottles in Ontario at present.

- For the past five years, municipalities have been paid between \$29 and \$36/tonne for clear glass and nothing for coloured glass (currently there is no local market for significant quantities of coloured glass), nowhere near the \$50/tonne (total value of \$4 million for 80,000 tonnes) that has been suggested by OI.
- Each year, Unical, a respected glass recycling company in Montreal buys more than 30,000 tonnes of Blue Box glass from Ontario municipalities.
- Unical also sells about 40,000 tonnes of both clear and coloured glass “cullet” to OI annually to be used in the manufacture of new glass bottles.

### **Improving the Value of Glass Recycling in Ontario**

Stewardship Ontario and Ontario municipalities are working together, in partnership, through the Municipal Industry Partnership Committee at WDO to develop new processing capacity in Ontario for recycled glass (for example, see Unical letter).

- A number of initiatives funded by Stewardship Ontario’s Glass Market Development Fund are underway across Ontario to secure and improve markets for mixed glass derived from “single stream” and “commingled” operations. The Fund is supported financially by companies, such as LCBO, who use glass packaging in Ontario.
- As an example, in partnership with six major municipalities in and around the GTA including Toronto, Peel, York, Durham, Hamilton and Guelph, Stewardship Ontario conducted a tendering and review process to establish a new glass processing facility in Ontario. When it is operational in 2007, the state-of-the-art glass recycling facility will process between 80,000 and 100,000 tonnes of mixed Blue Box glass. The glass will be available to end markets to be made into high value new glass bottles and fibreglass (similar to the glass market that currently operates in Alberta). There are two fibreglass manufacturing facilities in Ontario.
- The net impact of this innovation in the Blue Box program will be 1) to collect recycled glass cost efficiently and 2) to create a high value, end use for clear, coloured and “mixed” glass, including new glass bottles. The combined effect will benefit both municipalities and the companies who share Blue Box recycling system costs under the *Waste Diversion Act*.

### **A deposit-return program for LCBO containers is not the right path to improvement.**

- Overall, glass is achieving a comparatively high recovery rate, and the recovery rate for wine and spirits bottles (at 65%) is the highest among all glass containers, and one of the highest of all materials in the Blue Box.
- Although a deposit-return system on LCBO glass might achieve a marginal increase in recovery today (deposit systems in Alberta, Nova Scotia and British Columbia currently achieve recovery rates of 79%, 72% and 68%, respectively), it would substantially increase costs and inconvenience for consumers.
- Forty per cent of the glass currently collected in the Blue Box—about 48,000 tonnes—is non-LCBO food and beverage packaging. Under a deposit system municipalities would still collect glass in their Blue Boxes. Furthermore, the trucks currently used to collect recyclables would still be doing the job of collecting the

other 98% of the materials recycled in our Blue Box system, so savings would be small.

- Improvements in glass recycling capacity made possible by Stewardship Ontario's Glass Market Development Fund will reduce substantially the cost of glass recycling, likely by more than any reduction in operating costs that could be achieved by removing LCBO glass.

---

[1] Results of the WDO Datacall may be found at, <http://www.wdo.ca/reports/Default.aspx?rcat=39674>

[2] Stewardship Ontario Waste Composition Audits, [http://www.stewardshipontario.ca/funding/e&e/waste\\_audit.htm](http://www.stewardshipontario.ca/funding/e&e/waste_audit.htm)