



Recycling  
Council of  
Ontario



Canadian  
Council of  
Grocery  
Distributors

Conseil  
canadien des  
distributeurs  
en alimentation



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT GROCERS  
FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES ÉPICIERS INDÉPENDANTS

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## ONTARIO PLASTIC BAG REDUCTION TASK GROUP

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PROGRESS REPORT, 2008/09

DECEMBER 20, 2010

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:  
ACHIEVING THE 50% REDUCTION TARGET**

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In May 2007, the Ontario Plastic Bag Reduction Task Group was formed to respond to a government initiative to reduce by 50% the number of carry-out plastic bags distributed in Ontario by 2012.

The Task Group is led by the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD), the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFIG), the Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA), the Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO), and Retail Council of Canada (RCC).

The goal of the Task Group is to build a strong framework for reducing the number of carry-out plastic bags distributed in Ontario through application of the 3Rs approach: **REDUCE. REUSE. RECYCLE** (3Rs). Having introduced a wide range of activities across the province to support the 3Rs framework for plastic bags, the Task Group is pleased to report that the initiative has met its 50% reduction target of 2.16 billion plastic bags.

**KEY INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

- *Overall, Ontario retailers have reduced the number of carry-out plastic bags they distributed to customers by approximately 2.5 billion bags – a **58% reduction over three years**. In 2009, the estimated total number of plastic bags distributed was 1.8 billion bags, compared to 4.3 billion plastic bags in 2006 (baseline).*
- *Ontarians have **recycled more than 938 million carry-out plastic bags** since 2007, using retailer and municipal recycling programs –using a municipal 37.5% recycling rate.*
- *An **estimated total of 1.02 billion plastic bags were reused** for secondary purposes (e.g., a container for garbage, organics or recyclables) in 2009 – a 59.1% alternate use or reuse rate.*

Key factors contributing to the initiative's success include increased availability of reusable options like reusable bags and bins, improved bagging practices at check-outs, in-store incentives encouraging reduction and recycling, more in-store collection points for recycling, increased recycled content in plastic bags where possible, and greater consumer awareness of the 3Rs.

Recognizing the importance of transparency, the Task Group has set measurable reduction targets against a baseline calculated using 2006 data from Stewardship Ontario (for more information about the reporting methodology, see Appendix A). This report covers a two-year period from 1 January 2008, through 31 December 2009, and summarizes progress towards meeting these

targets. The report is available on the member associations' websites. A copy will also be provided to Waste Diversion Ontario.

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## ONTARIO PLASTIC BAG REDUCTION TASK GROUP

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### CANADIAN COUNCIL OF GROCERY DISTRIBUTORS (CCGD)

The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD) is a not-for-profit organization committed to advancing and promoting the grocery and foodservice distribution industry in Canada, at both regional and national levels. CCGD members represent approximately \$121 billion in retail sales, of which \$42 billion comes from the foodservice sector. Together our members employ over 428,000 Canadians in more than 12,000 communities across Canada. More information can be obtained from our website at <http://www.ccgd.ca/>

### CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT GROCERS (CFIG)

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFIG) is a non-profit trade association founded in 1962 which continues to be a collaborative community, equipping and enabling independent, franchised and specialty grocers for sustainable success. Representing over 4,000 grocery retailers from every part of Canada, CFIG is a strong and united voice for independent grocers, providing programs for operational excellence, facilitating educational and training programs, and fostering relationships among retailers and suppliers. CFIG is a respected organization that speaks confidently for its retail members to industry, government, and the consumer. More information can be obtained from our website at <http://www.cfig.ca>

### CANADIAN PLASTICS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (CPIA)

The Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA), a not-for-profit trade association, is the voice of the Canadian Plastics Industry and represents the entire plastics value chain. With over 3,350 companies employing 106,000 workers, Canada's \$31-billion plastics industry is a sophisticated, multi-faceted sector encompassing plastic products manufacturing, machinery, moulds and resins. CPIA endeavours include the enhancement of plastics post-use resource recovery. More information can be obtained from our web site at <http://www.plastics.ca>

### RECYCLING COUNCIL OF ONTARIO (RCO)

The Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO) is a not-for-profit organization committed to minimizing society's impact on the environment by eliminating waste. Our mission is to inform and educate all members of society about the generation of waste, the avoidance of waste, the more efficient use of resources and the benefits and consequences of these activities. More information can be obtained from our website at <http://www.rco.on.ca>

### RETAIL COUNCIL OF CANADA (RCC)

Retail Council of Canada (RCC) has been the Voice of Retail in Canada since 1963. We speak for an industry that touches the daily lives of Canadians in every corner of the country – by providing jobs, career opportunities, and by investing in the communities we serve. RCC is a not-for-profit, industry-funded association representing more than 43,000 store fronts of all retail formats across Canada, including department, specialty, discount and independent stores, and online merchants. More information can be obtained from our website at <http://www.retailcouncil.org>

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### DATA SUMMARY, 2007-2009

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The objective of the initiative is to reduce by 50% the number of carry-out plastic bags (2.16 billion plastic bags) distributed in Ontario by 2012. The tables below summarize reduction, recycling and reuse data for carry-out plastic bags.<sup>1</sup>

#### **REDUCING**

Overall, the total estimated reduction in the number of carry-out plastic bags distributed in Ontario was 2.5 billion plastic bags between 2006 and 2009 – a **58% reduction** over three years. In 2006, Ontario retailers distributed approximately 4.3 billion plastic bags. By comparison, they distributed approximately 3.0 billion plastic bags in 2008, and approximately 1.8 billion plastic bags in 2009.

On a per capita basis, Ontarians reduced their use of plastic bags from 340 to 139 bags per person – a **59% reduction** over three years. Table 1 provides a summary of the estimated number of plastic bags distributed in Ontario and annual percentage change.

*Table 1: Plastic bags distributed in Ontario, 2006-2009*

YEAR	TOTAL NO. OF PLASTIC BAGS DISTRIBUTED	ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE	TOTAL NO. OF BAGS DISTRIBUTED PER CAPITA	ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE
2006	4,318,015,282	---	340	--
2007	4,048,803,249	-6.2	316	- 7.1
2008	3,002,807,799	-25.8	232	-26.6
2009	1,813,382,458	-39.6	139	-40.2

#### **RECYCLING**

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Figures may not add due to rounding.

Ontarians have recycled more than 938 million carry-out plastic bags since 2007, using retailer and municipal Blue Box programs. Compared to the baseline, this means that Ontarians have increased the number of plastic bags they recycled by more than 68 million bags.

Municipal recycling kgs were calculated using a weighted average of a 35.7% recycling rate to represent the % of carry-out bags recovered by municipal programs that accept plastic film, utilizing WDO data for Total Plastic Film Recycled in Ontario.

However, there has been a mixed report on recycling. In 2007, the total estimated number of plastic bags recycled was 329 million, an increase of more than 80 million over the baseline (32% annual change). By comparison, the recycling rate fell between 2007 and 2008 (-11.5% annual change), but increased between 2008 and 2009 (9.1% annual change). This mixed report is largely attributable to the decline in the number of plastic bags in circulation. Table 2 provides a summary of the estimated total number of plastic bags recycled in Ontario.

*Table 2: Plastic bags recycled in Ontario, 2006-2009*

YEAR	TOTAL NO. OF PLASTIC BAGS RECYCLED	ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE	NO. OF BAGS RECYCLED PER CAPITA
2006	249,000,220	--	20
2007	329,309,486	32.3	26
2008	291,298,954	-11.5	23
2009	317,859,220	9.1	24

Table 3 provides a **further breakdown** of the total number of plastic bags recycled, showing the estimated number of plastic bags recycled by Ontario retailer and municipal Blue Box programs.

*Table 3: Total number of plastic bags recycled in Ontario by program, 2006-2009*

YEAR	RETAILER RECYCLING (ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE)	MUNICIPAL BLUE BOX RECYCLING (ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE)
2006	71,219,932	177,780,288
2007	87,407,350 (22.7)	241,902,136 (36.1)
2008	107,032,989 (22.5)	184,265,965 (-23.8)
2009	104,031,143 (- 2.8)	213,828,077 (16.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>396,691,414</b>	<b>817,776,465</b>

## REUSING

Reuse plays an important role in supporting the initiative's goal to reduce the number of plastic bags distributed for single-use purposes. Ontario retailers are encouraging their customers to regularly employ reusable alternatives like reusable bags and plastic bins.

Alternate use of conventional bag units was calculated to be 59.1% using a weighted average of 9.3 grams.

It is also important to note that carry-out plastic bags are often used more than once for other purposes such as garbage bags in kitchens, lunch bags or general purpose carry bags. Waste audits conducted by Stewardship Ontario in communities across Ontario found that 1.02 billion bags were reused as a container for garbage, organics or recyclables in 2009.

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## APPENDIX: REPORTING METHODOLOGY

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The baseline estimates used to measure the initiative's progress over the five-year period are from 2006 data collected by Stewardship Ontario. Stewardship Ontario is described below, followed by a summary of aspects of the data collection methodology used for the plastic bag data.

### *STEWARDSHIP ONTARIO*

Stewardship Ontario, the province's first Industry Funding Organization (IFO), was created in 2002, in response to Sections 23 and 24 of the Waste Diversion Act, 2002. Under this Act, the Minister of the Environment may require Waste Diversion Ontario to develop a waste diversion program for a "designated waste" in conjunction with an IFO.

Ontario's Waste Diversion Act requires companies that are "brand owners<sup>2</sup>" or "first importers<sup>3</sup>," and whose products' packaging and/or printed material end up in Ontario residential Blue Boxes or the municipal residential waste system, to register with Stewardship Ontario. Many of these companies are further obligated to file annual Steward's Reports and pay fees to discharge their legal obligations – i.e., 50 per cent of the net cost of the Ontario Blue Box recycling program.

Designated Blue Box Waste (DBBW) includes packaging and/or printed materials comprised of metal, glass, paper, **plastics**, textiles or any combination of these materials that are managed in the Ontario residential waste stream. Companies with gross Ontario sales of greater than \$2 million are obligated to file one or more Steward's Reports with Stewardship Ontario. Steward's Reports provide information about all DBBW sold or distributed in Ontario by stewards, expressed in kilograms.

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<sup>2</sup> **Brand Owners** are Ontario resident companies or individuals that operate in the Ontario marketplace. This includes people and companies that are the registered holders of a trademark, or the licensees of a trademark. It includes companies or individuals that own or are the licensee(s) of intellectual property rights of a brand of printed material or product.

<sup>3</sup> **First Importers** are Ontario-resident companies or individuals that import products into the province where the Brand Owner(s) are not in Ontario.

**STEWARDSHIP ONTARIO'S METHODOLOGY:  
CALCULATIONS FOR PLASTIC BAG TASK GROUP**

Stewardship Ontario has used annual Stewards' Report data to determine the amount of carry-out plastic bags distributed into the marketplace by Stewards each year. To refine the calculation, Stewardship Ontario has been able to separately identify and analyze the total weight of carry-out plastic bags reported by Stewards each year (distinct from all plastic film). It has used an average weight factor to convert the kilograms into numbers of carry-out bags.

Baseline measures and annual reduction data on carry-out plastic bags have been collected by Stewardship Ontario using the following information:

1. Annual Stewards' Reports
2. Municipal Waste Audits and Blue Box Recycling Program Data
3. Estimate for Non-Reporting Stewards (10%)<sup>4</sup>
4. Estimate for Average Bag Weight<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Estimate for Non-Reporting Stewards:* To ensure the most accurate and representative carry-out plastic bag data for Ontario, Stewardship Ontario calculated an estimate for the unknown weight of carry-out plastic bags from non-reporting Stewards (10%) who fall under the de minimis threshold in sales (less than \$2 million) and weight (less than 15 tonnes) and thus do not report to Stewardship Ontario.

<sup>5</sup> *Estimate for Average Bag Weight:* Stewardship Ontario estimated the average bag weight based on a sample of bags that were collected from a representative sample of retailers. New bags are added to the sampling each year to ensure the most up-to-date and accurate data. Bags were weighed and measured, and measurements were then grouped into their various size categories and a weighted average was then applied.