



# The **BLUE BOX** Program

*Summary Report – Research on Consumers' Attitudes Towards the Blue Box Program and Recycling*



## Introduction

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The popularity and awareness of the Blue Box Program in Ontario continues to grow. As we meet with our stakeholders, we find they express a great deal of interest in understanding more about the Blue Box and consumers' reactions, options and thoughts about it.

To continue to increase our understanding of consumers' thoughts and activities in relation to the Blue Box Program, and to provide some insight to our stakeholders, we undertook a major research project in March 2011 to gather more intelligence and insight, and to use this information to inform and support the Blue Box brand management and strategy planning.

Our mission at Stewardship Ontario is to make Ontario's recycling program even better, more effective and more efficient. The Blue Box Program forms a major part of Ontario's recycling success and by embracing innovation, harnessing creativity, and building on achievements to date, we aim to be, with our stewards, ongoing leaders in responsible product stewardship.

We are pleased to share some highlights from this research with you. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to get in touch.

With thanks,

Lyle Clarke  
Executive Vice President  
Stewardship Ontario



## About the Research

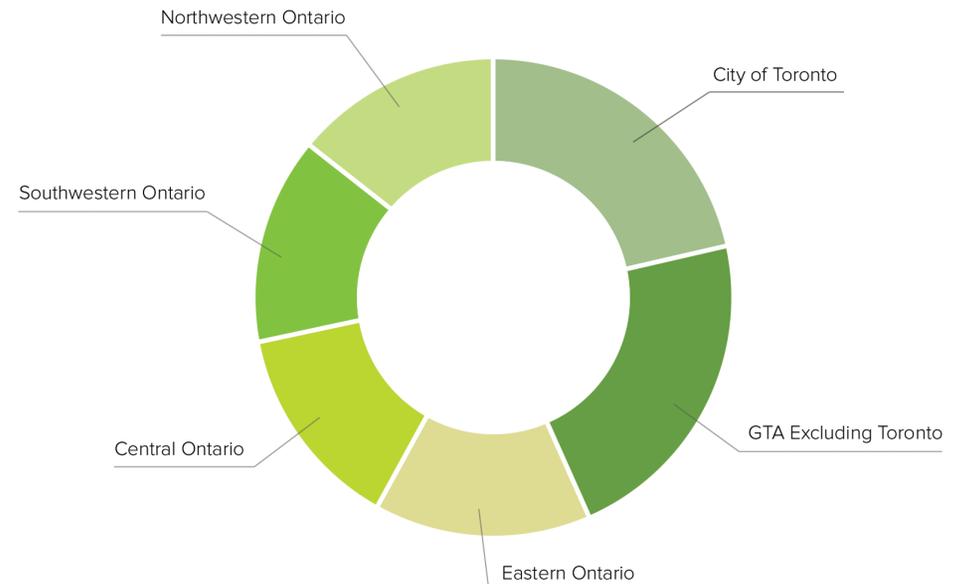
Stewardship Ontario commissioned quantitative research to understand consumers' attitudes towards environmental issues related to product packaging, and their usage and recycling of such packaging through Ontario's Blue Box.

An online quantitative 30 minute survey was conducted among 3,200 respondents from across Ontario in March 2011.

The regional representation consisted of:

- City of Toronto – 700
- GTA excluding Toronto – 700
- Eastern Ontario – 450
- Central Ontario – 450
- Southwestern Ontario – 450
- Northwestern Ontario – 450

The general population survey data was weighted by age, gender and region to ensure that the results are representative of the opinions of the Canadian general public 18 years of age and older.





## Success of Ontario's Blue Box Program to Date

The Blue Box Program reaches

95%

of the 13 million people in Ontario.

The Blue Box collects among the broadest range of materials

anywhere.

Ontario's printed paper and packaging diversion rate is the

highest

in North America.

The amount of recycling collected in the Blue Box last year weighed

17

times more than the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The official target for diversion in Ontario is 60%. Last year, the Blue Box Program achieved a diversion rate of almost

13%

above target.

Almost a million

tonnes

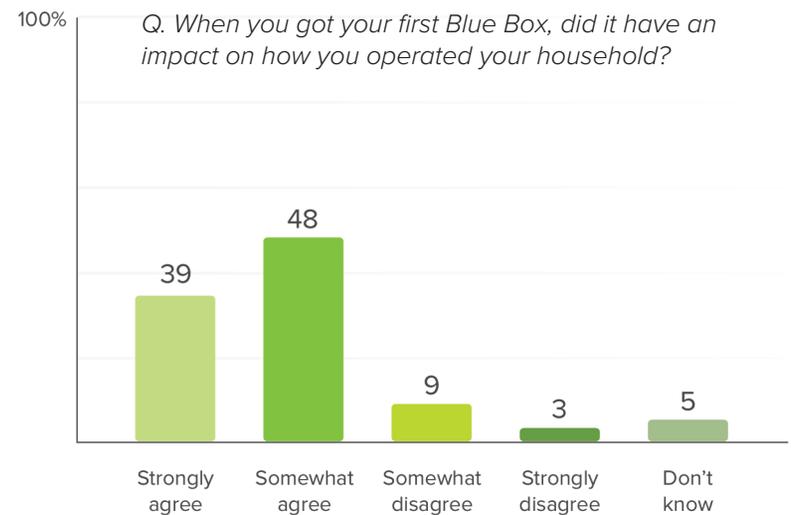
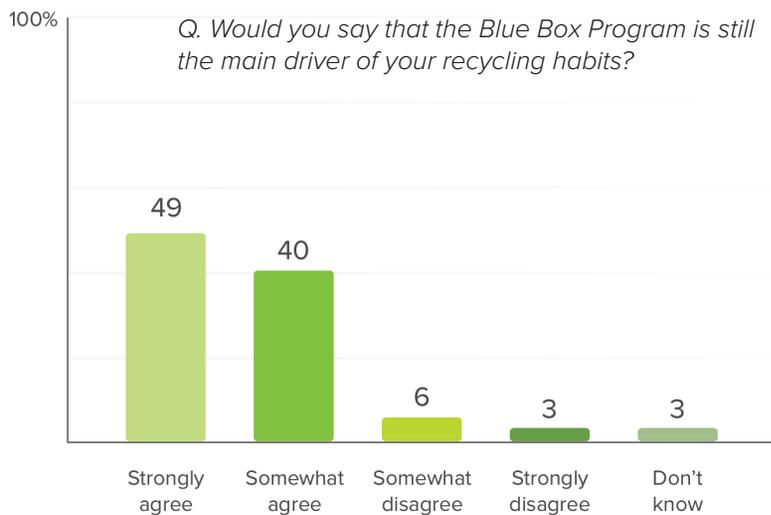
of material is being kept away from landfill every year.



## The Blue Box Continues to be Pivotal to Recycling Behaviour

Although the blue box has been around for 30 years, its role in supporting the environment continues to be vital.

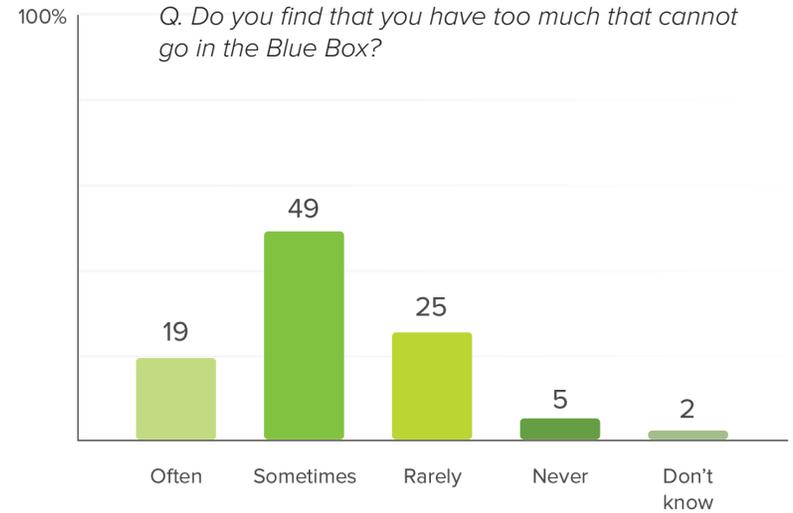
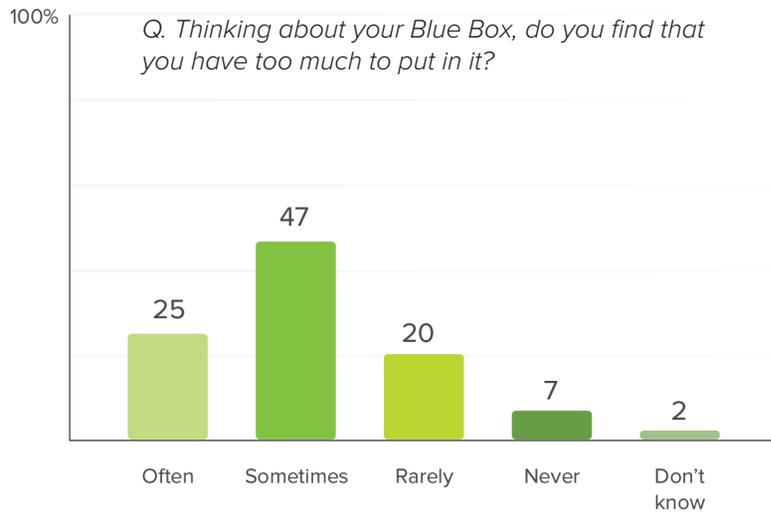
- Nearly nine in ten (89%) feel that the Blue Box Program is the main driver of their recycling habits, and for 75%, it is their primary environmental effort
- Most people (83%) said that the introduction of the Blue Box impacted on how their households operate, and also had some impact on people's purchasing behaviour





Demand for recycling is continuing to increase. New innovations and strategies are needed to ensure the Blue Box Program keeps up with the speed of environmental demand and the growing amounts of new packaging:

- 72% of those surveyed said they find their Blue Box overflowing
- Two-thirds (68%) find they still have too much packaging that cannot be placed in the Blue Box

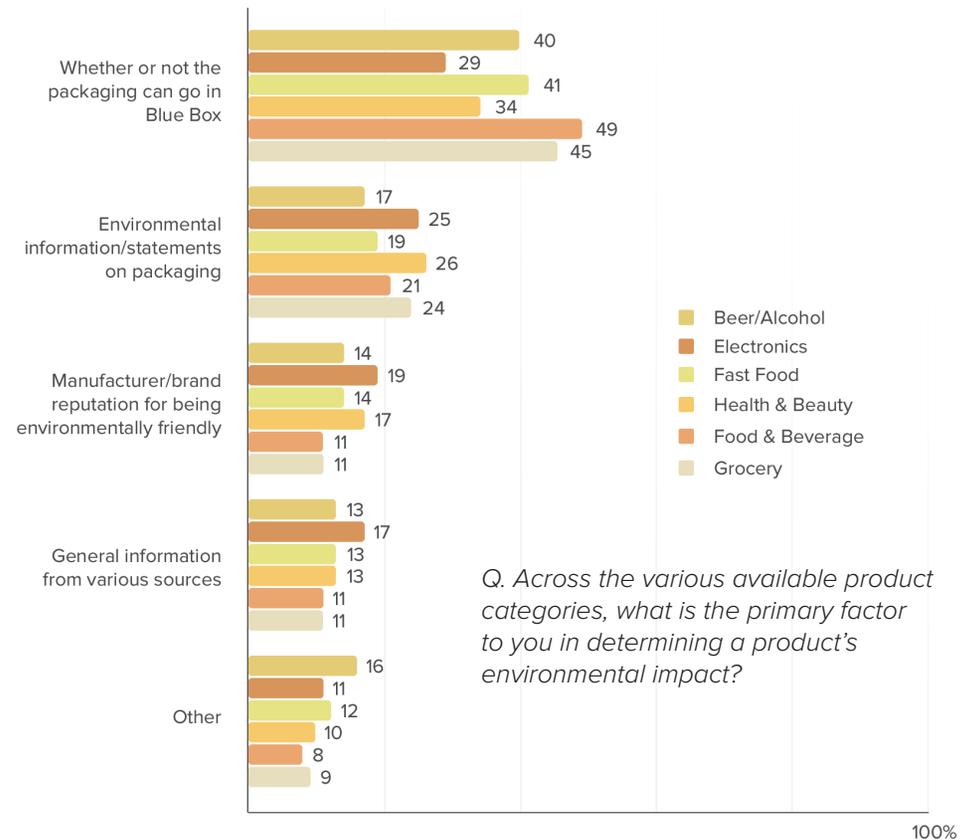




## The Blue Box and Its Influence on Purchasing Decisions

Interestingly, consumers keep the Blue Box, and what packaging can be recycled in it, front-of-mind when choosing what products they buy:

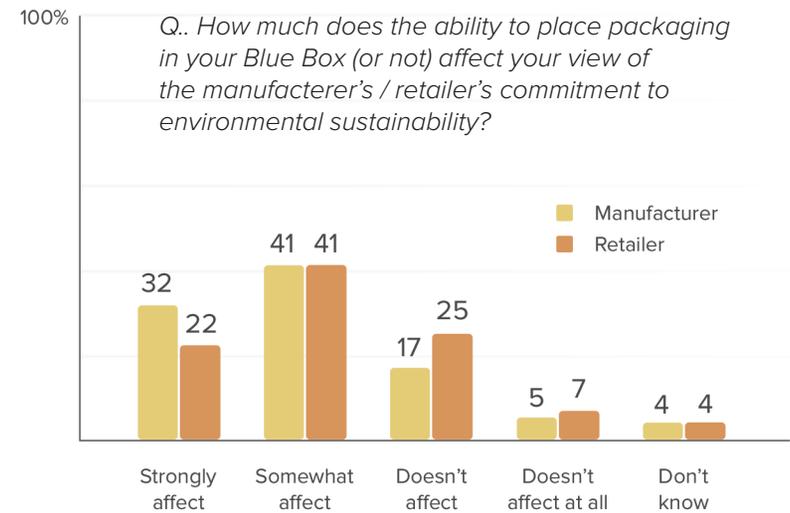
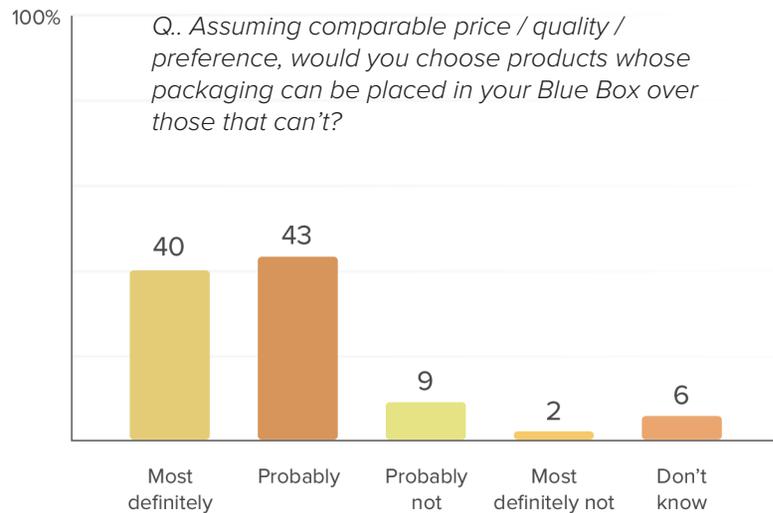
- Many factors are concerned when consumers identify environmentally friendly products, but acceptance in the Blue Box stands out (55% stating it is very important), ahead of less packaging (46% very important) and products made of recycled materials (43% very important)
- In determining a product's environmental impact, the Blue Box 'designation' is the primary factor in all measured product categories, but particularly in the grocery, food/beverage, fast food and beer/alcohol bottles (primary factor for 40%-49%)





The 'Blue Box effect' has a considerable impact on consumer behaviour:

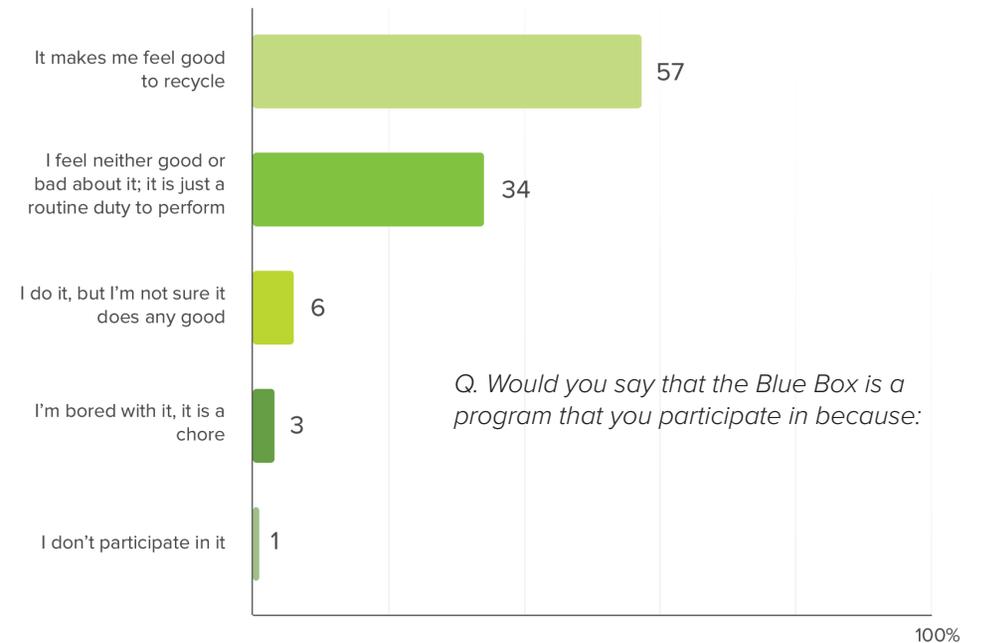
- A vast majority (83%) would choose products whose packaging can be placed in the Blue Box over those that cannot, assuming price, quality and performance were comparable
- The availability of Blue Box friendly packaging influences many consumers' perceptions of the manufacturer's environmental commitment (73% agree). This is also evident in relation to retailers (64% agree)





## Why Do People Participate in the Blue Box Program?

- Nearly six in ten (57%) participate because of personal satisfaction – it makes them feel good to recycle. For over a third (34%) it has become routine
- Older Ontarians, 55 years plus, and female participants are slightly more likely to feel good about recycling (61% and 62%), while younger Ontarians, those under 35, and male participants are slightly more likely to recycle because of routine (39% and 38%)

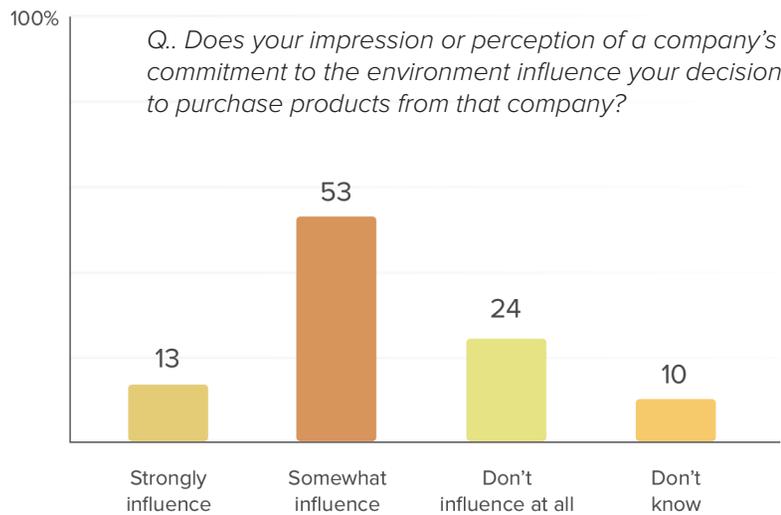




## Importance of Environmental Issues to Consumers

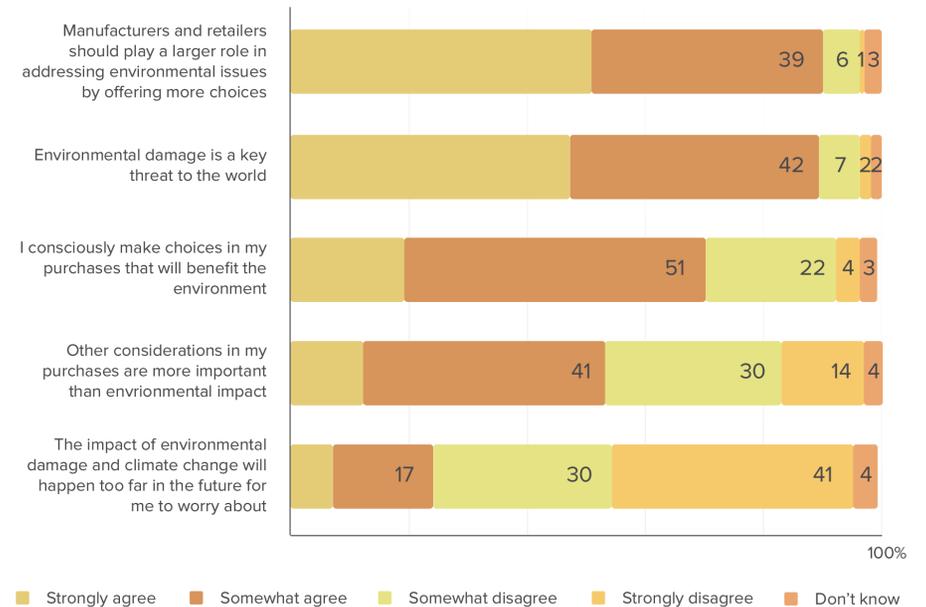
Today's consumers are more savvy and environmentally aware. This puts added pressure on manufacturers and retailers to produce environmentally friendly products and act in environmentally sustainable ways.

- Two-thirds (66%) of people said their purchases are influenced by their perceptions of a company's commitment to the environment; higher at 70% among younger generations



- Most Ontarians (89%) agree that environmental damage is a key threat to the world. Just as many (90%) feel there is a need for more environmentally friendly choices from manufacturers and retailers
- Seven in ten claim to consciously choose products that are environmentally friendly

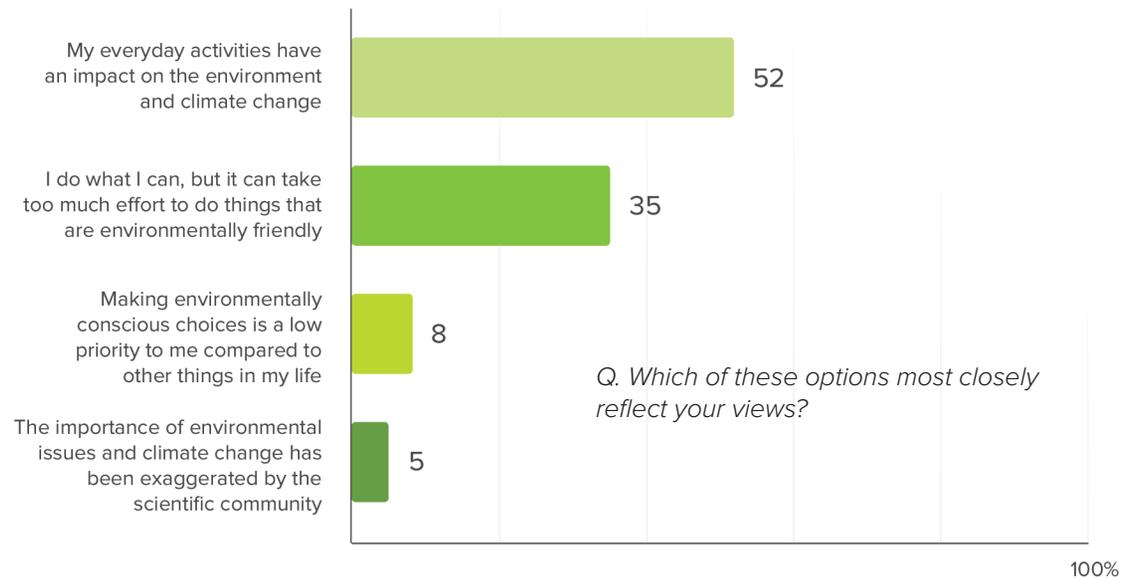
Q.. How much do you agree with the following statements?





## Who's Recycling More?

- Many (52%) believe that their behaviour can influence environmental changes, whether positive or negative. This attitude is more visible among older Ontarians aged 55+ – 63% vs. 38% among the under 35's
- Another third (35%) do their part, even though they feel it takes too much effort to be environmentally friendly. Younger Ontarians, those under 35, particularly feel this way – 50% vs. 24% among the 55+ segments





## The New Norm

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Environmental sustainability is no longer a fringe issue: it is central to consumers' concerns; it influences consumer behaviour; it is often central to the operations of business; and it is a key feature in government policy.

With large numbers of consumers selecting 'green' products and product packaging options, manufacturers and retailers' contribution to diverting more materials to the Blue Box will be critical to continuing to build on the success of the Blue Box Program.

Recycling in Ontario is in many ways symbolized and defined by its Blue Box. It reaches 95% of the 13 million people living in the province and collects among the broadest range of materials anywhere. Our vision is to expand the range of materials accepted and establish some consistency across the province in terms of what's accepted.

Although our printed paper and packaging diversion rate is the highest in North America, we can still do so much more to divert waste from landfills and waterways, and further build on the foundations we are laying down for a greener, cleaner and more sustainable future.

### Contact

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