

Questions and Answers



About Nova Scotia's Updated Blue Bag Recycling Program

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General Overview

1. What's happening to Nova Scotia's blue bag recycling program?

Nova Scotia is enhancing the existing recycling program by changing who runs and pays for the blue bag recycling program. Starting December 1, 2025, companies that make or sell packaging and paper will take over responsibility from municipalities. This system is called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging, Paper and Paper Like Products (EPR for PPP) and is meant to improve recycling and reduce waste. Batteries, paint, tires, electronics recycling programs are all other examples of EPR systems.

2. Why is the program changing?

Right now, municipalities run and pay for recycling. With the new provincial rules, the producers of packaging and paper products will fully fund and operate the program instead. This change is designed to support better recycling for residents and help protect the environment.

3. What are the benefits of the new system?

EPR helps: Increase recycling rates, reduce waste, encourage companies to design packaging that is easier to recycle, move toward a circular economy where materials are reused instead of thrown away

4. Who is Circular Materials?

Circular Materials is a national, not-for-profit organization that works with producers to run recycling programs. In Nova Scotia, they will be responsible for operating the new packaging and paper recycling system. Their goal is to recycle more materials and return them to the supply chain to be reused.

5. Where are Circular Materials located?

Their head office is in Toronto, but they have staff across Canada — including people who live and work right here in Nova Scotia.

6. Why is Circular Materials responsible for our recycling program?

Because Nova Scotia is moving to an EPR system. Under this system, producers must run and fund the recycling program, and Circular Materials has been chosen to manage it on their behalf.

7. How are Municipalities involved?

They have partnered with Circular Materials to continue to manage the programs and implement any changes.

8. What changes will residents expect to see?

Nothing drastic. Material will still be collected curbside, still call into the helpline for questions. More materials will be accepted in the program, and other will be eligible for depot drop off.

Curbside Collection Questions

1. What changes will I see curbside?

More materials will be allowed to be included in the bag such as coffee cups, ice cream containers, tooth paste tubes deodorant etc. Things such as Styrofoam, non-hazardous aerosols and flexible packaging (chip bag/candy wrappers) will be eligible for depot. Books are not included.

2. Will there be a new sorting guide provided by the Municipality?

New sorting guides will be mailed out as part of March's Newsletter. Please refer to the waste app/Solid Waste Helpline for any questions.

3. Why do I have to bring Styrofoam, aerosols and flexible packaging to the Enviro-depots?

You do not have to, just a new option to help recycle this material and keep out of landfill

4. Will I get rejected for putting flexible packaging, Styrofoam and aerosols into my blue bag

We ask that you don't because they go to a different facility and may not be able to be recycled if they go into your blue bag. At depots they go to designated facilities. They will not be rejected at this time but may be in the future.

5. Will I get rejected for putting flexible packaging, Styrofoam and aerosols into my garbage bag?

No you will not. These are not banned landfill items.

6. Why aren't books/novels part of the program?

The program is for packaging type products. Books/novel makers do not put money into the program, so they can't be picked up with this program

7. What do I do with books?

Take them to any local donation area, such as Steps on Arthur + other local drop offs

8. Don't Municipalities decide what goes into the recycling bag?

Before December 1st they did, after December 1st the provincial government passed a regulation changing the responsibility of Municipalities to the Producers.

Depot Questions

1. I don't want to take my non-hazardous aerosols, flexible packaging and Styrofoam to the depots. Can I just put them into recycling?

We ask that you don't because they go to a different facility and may not be able to be recycled if they go into your blue bag. At depots they go to designated facilities. They will not be rejected at this time but may be in the future.

2. Do I have to separate all of my refundable, aerosols, Styrofoam and flexible packaging to bring to the depots or can I put them all in one bag?

Yes the depots are asking they be separated before they come in.

3. Do I get money back like when I bring my pop cans?

No you do not. There is no deposit fee on these items in check out, so you get no money back. Just an option to recycle.

Misc. Questions

1. If CM is funding the recycling program, will my taxes go down?

The operating budget for the Municipality of Colchester has been approved by council for this year solid waste operations. Future budgets will be reviewed for 2026/27 budget year.

2. I don't like these new changes, who do I talk to complain/escalate?

Have to call Circular Materials. info@circularmaterials.ca. 1-877-667-2626.

3. Why are we doing this here in Colchester/Truro/Stewiacke?

Everywhere recycles differently This is a new provincial program, now everyone in Nova Scotia can recycle the same things the same way with 1 sorting guide.

4. Why are we doing this in Nova Scotia?

Currently, only PEI and the Northwest Territories are the only locations in Canada that haven't transitioned to this type of program.

5. Are the rules the same for residential recycling and recycling at businesses?

Currently EPR changes only apply to residential materials (including at schools, apartments and campgrounds). Businesses are status quo for what they can recycle.

Material Sorting Questions

Below are various sorting questions that have been raised over the last 2 months. For any specific questions, it is recommended residents check the waste sorting app or call the Solid Waste Helpline

1. How clean does the packaging need to be?

Just rinse and ensure the product/food is removed. We do not expect it to have no residue.

2. Are acrylic and watercolour paint tubes included in the program?

The paint itself is water based and does not come in under the paint program or HHW. These paint tubes (non-hazardous, not part of the paint program) would be part of the program.

3. Are plastic/wire hangers part of the program?

Yes, they are considered designated materials.

4. Do we want residents to remove the plastic insert with the remaining deodorant and just recycle the outer tube?

Removing everything inside a deodorant tube would be ideal; it is not necessary. We want people to use as much of the product as possible.

5. Berry and fruit boxes: Below are different examples of fruit boxes

- Plastic ones are included in the program
- The fibre ones are included in the program.
- The wooden ones are not included in the program.

6. What is the resident-facing message for lids where the instruction is to remove lids for recycling?

Lids can be placed in the container recycling bag.

7. Bubble Wrap is listed as a depot item. If someone chooses not to bring it to the depot, would it be garbage, even though LDPE is banned from landfill?

Bubble wrap can be placed in the container recycling bag. Please note that participating drop-off locations will also accept this material as a flexible plastic. Note: promote curbside first.

Sorting questions on Specific items

Laminated paper (ex. poster in a classroom)

This is a designated material. Please place it in the fibre recycling bag.

Popcorn bags:

Yes, this item goes to the fibre recycling bag.

Dog training pads:

This is not a designated material and does not belong in recycling.

How dirty/contaminated is too contaminated?

(ex. Ribs baked on foil, paper plate with coleslaw soaked in, flyers soaked in rain)

Please instruct residents to remove food residue best they can and rinse where possible.

Coffee pods

Garbage

It says paper laminates are included in both recycling and fiber streams. How do you know the difference??

A good rule to follow is 2D vs. 3D. If the paper laminate can be easily folded into 2D it goes into fiber. Examples include dog food bags, birthday present bags, popcorn bags. If the paper laminate cannot easily be folded, it is c

