

*This op-ed has been prepared by **Jo-Anne St. Godard**, Executive Director of Recycling Council of Ontario, for your publication's consideration. Relevant photos are attached. If you have any questions, please contact Emma Minsky at 416-972-7404 or eminsky@ecostrategy.ca.*



Recycling Council of Ontario

Integrated and Convenient Recycling Is a Plus for Ontario

We generate a lot of waste. In fact, when compared to other provinces, Ontario is amongst the worst, generating almost 10 million tonnes of waste annually. Of that, only 25 per cent of all the materials we discard go into the recycling system. And despite the efficiency and success of the blue box program, we throw out a lot of materials that must stay out of landfill and still have value if recycled.

So how do we improve our recycling rate? Convenience. Particularly for common household items that blue box programs are not designed to accept: paint, batteries, and electronics. Rather than gathering dust in the garage or being set out for disposal, Ontario needs an integrated approach that offers consumers a convenient option for the proper handling of these items.

That approach is now being piloted by The Beer Store, which established a stand-alone returns and recycling facility. Recycling Plus is conveniently located in Toronto's downtown west end for thousands of residents and businesses to drop off the usual materials – beer, wine, and spirits containers – as well as unused paint, dead batteries, and unwanted electronics.

While many municipal facilities exist where people can return multiple categories of products, they are not always convenient or accessible to residents. Recycling Plus is the first integrated facility to be located in an urban neighbourhood and open during regular business hours.

The Beer Store, a long-time environmental steward, has collected, refilled and recycled containers at an impressive rate of over 90 per cent through its highly successfully deposit return program. It is now building on that success by partnering with Stewardship Ontario and Sims Recycling Solutions to expand the products and packaging it takes back. This pilot project is the first of its kind in Ontario and will test the viability of establishing additional outlets across the province.

Recycling Council of Ontario applauds the leadership shown by The Beer Store through this initiative, particularly the innovative partnership it has struck with Stewardship Ontario and Sims Recycling Solutions. We encourage more companies and product stewards to think outside the blue box and offer Ontarians an alternative and convenient option to help us all recycle more.

Ultimately, increasing Ontario's recycling rate is important for both economic and environmental reasons. Increased collection means greater markets for recyclable materials – including more potential for manufacturing jobs here in Ontario – and lower waste collection costs for municipalities and taxpayers. Most importantly, more recycling means protecting our natural resources and reducing wasted materials and potential toxins in landfills. And that's to all our benefit.

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