



Deposit Return in BC

30 Years of Success, Technology for the
Future and Lessons Learned

Cindy Coutts, President & CEO

October 30, 2025

Who We Are



Not-for-profit, product stewardship agency in BC for over 30 years.



Directly – 70 employees
Indirectly – 700+ employees



Established by producers to manage EPR regulatory obligations in BC; the deposit and recycling system for most ready-to-drink beverage containers.



Manage EPR programs on behalf of Electronics and Major Appliances

Over 25 billion containers recycled



BRITISH COLUMBIA

EPR | EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY



BC Recycling Regulation

Schedule 1, Beverage Container Product
Category (BC Reg. 449/2004)



Shifts costs away from government and taxpayers to the producers, brand owners and consumers for end-of-life products/packaging

Results-Based Regulation

1. 75% recovery requirements
2. Accessibility requirements
3. Awareness requirements
4. Return to Retail Requirement
5. Annual Audited Report
6. Producers must pay full cost

Not-for-profit industry owned Producer Responsibility Organization, created to meet producer obligations under the Regulation

Return-It by the Numbers: 2024



RECOVERY
RATE

78.3%

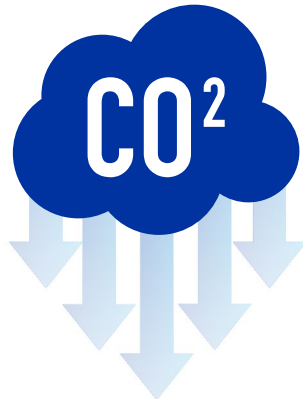
1.3Billion

Containers Collected



ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT

125.9 thousand
tonnes



PROGRAM
AWARENESS

99%



ACCESS
LEVEL

99.2%



Our Infrastructure: Convenience

- Return-It network (85% of volume)
 - 160 independently owned and operated depots
 - 30 corporately owned or operated locations
- Retail (1.5% of volume)
 - 260 grocery stores
 - 195 Government liquor stores
- Other collection points (14% of volume)
 - Curbside blue bin
 - IC&I partnerships



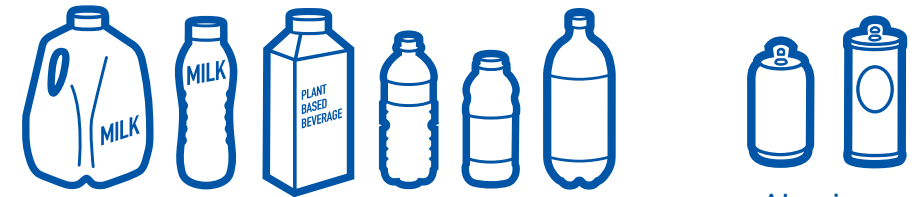
Materials in the program

All ready-to-drink beverages

- **Beverage types:** water, pop, juice, milk, plant-based, energy drinks, wine, spirits, dealcoholized beer & spirits
- **Materials:** PET / HDPE plastic, aluminum, glass, paper, cardboard, bi-metal, laminates, ceramics



All beverage containers collected within the Return-It system are recycled in accordance with the Recycling Regulation

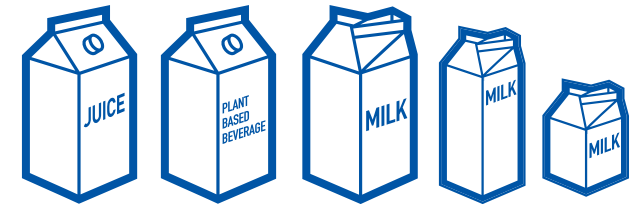


Plastic

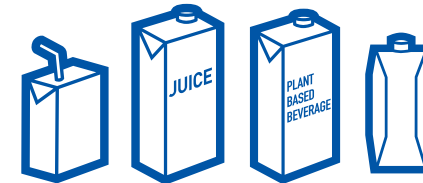
Aluminum



Pouches



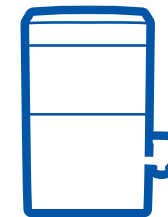
Gable Top



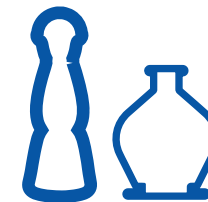
Drink Box



Glass



Bag-in-a-box



Ceramic



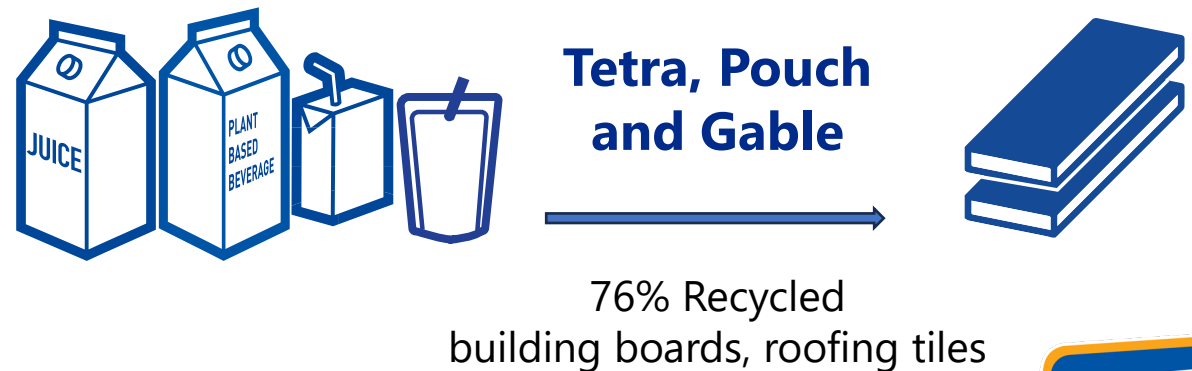
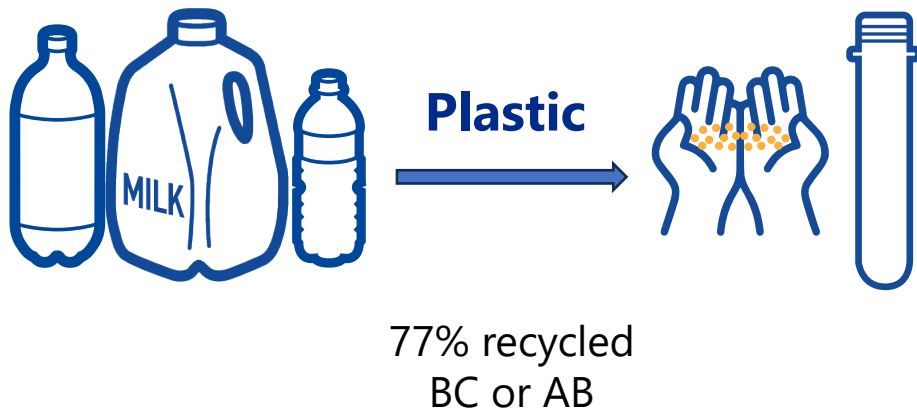
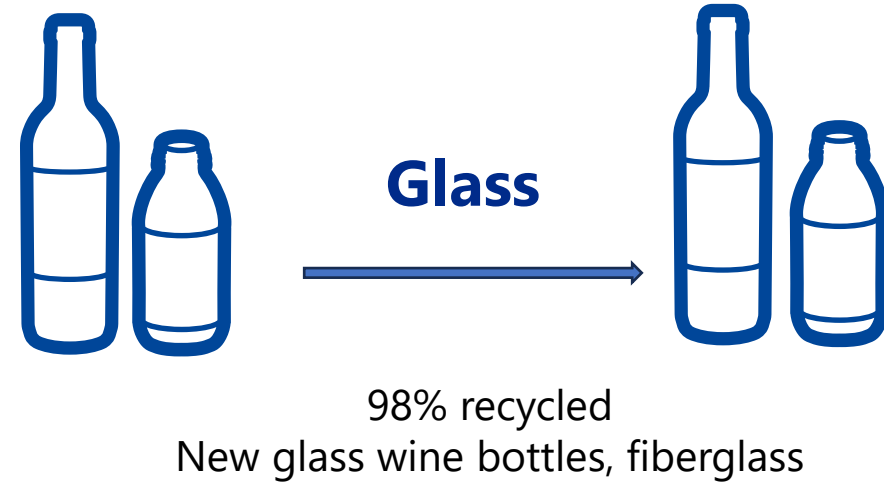
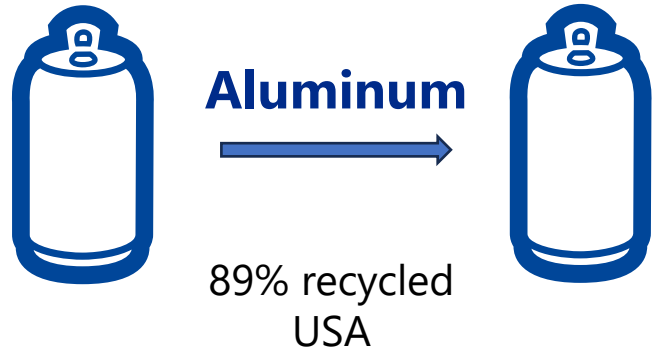
Bi-Metal



End of use recovered containers

2024

53% Recycled into New
Beverage Containers
92% recycled





Easy and Convenient



Modern customer recycling experience:
No sorting, no line-ups,
e-transfer refunds

 **+350,000**

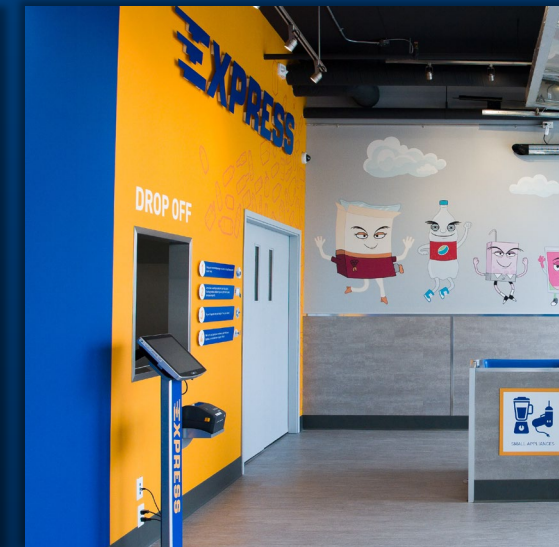
Over 350,000 registered customers and growing

15%

Represents 15% of all collections



Increases the number of containers returned by customers



Facilities to Meet All Needs



Full-service Facility

- Express and RVMs
- Multiple materials accepted
- Ideal customer experience



Return-It Express

- Avg. 3min customer time
- Dense urban areas
- Commercial retail / strata



Express & GO

- Unstaffed, solar powered
- Security alarm and cameras
- Rural and urban areas



- Standalone converted shipping container
- Ideal for dense urban areas or rural communities
 - Transfer stations (recycle multiple items)
 - Retail store parking lots (running errands)
- Unstaffed with longer operating hours
- All servicing handled by Return-It: cleaning, maintenance and pick-up



21
locations
across BC



19.2 million
containers collected in 2024
(1.4% of total volume)



How the System is Funded



Commodity value



Unredeemed deposits



Container Recycling Fee
(CRF)

Promotion & Education: Research + Audience Segmentation



	Regular Returners	Depot Fans	Convenience Trashers	On-the-Go Discarders	Uninformed Urbans
Segment sizing	44% people 19% containers produced 4% containers discarded	20% people 45% containers produced 4% containers discarded	6% people 13% containers produced 52% containers discarded	14% people 18% containers produced 15% containers discarded	16% people 5% containers produced 25% containers discarded
Key demographics	Average age 53 Equally male and female	Average age 50 Equally male and female	Average age 43 61% male	Average age 45 Almost equally male and female	Both young and old Equally male and female



Convenience trashers – discard approximately 87 million containers annually

Reasons Why You Would or Wouldn't Recycle Your Beverage Containers

Depends if
there is a
convenient
location
nearby



Return-It: Call to Action



P&E: Community Partnerships & Programs

- Return-It School
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- Canadian Plastics Pact (CPP)
- First Nations Recycling Initiative
- Circular Innovation Council
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation
- BC Parks & Outdoor Bin Program
- Canadians Baseball
- Vancouver Warriors
- Vancouver Titans e-sports
- Vancouver Surge: Call of Duty
- E-Games Stadiums
- Great Canadian Shoreline Clean up
- PNE – Playland



Return-It School Program

- Over 200 BC schools registered annually
- Free recycling bins for beverage containers
- Teacher resources: Return-It Man in school presentation / activity books
- Essay contest: \$5,000 / \$2,500 prizes



Technology



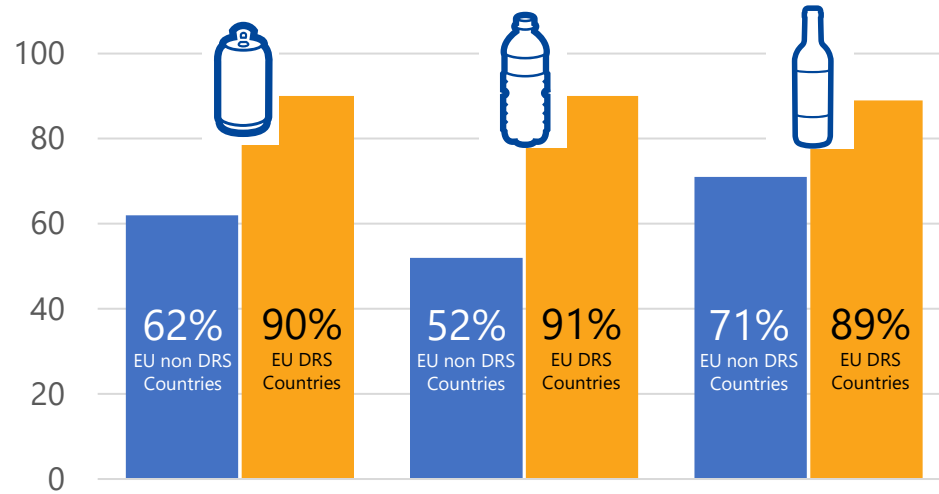
Technology



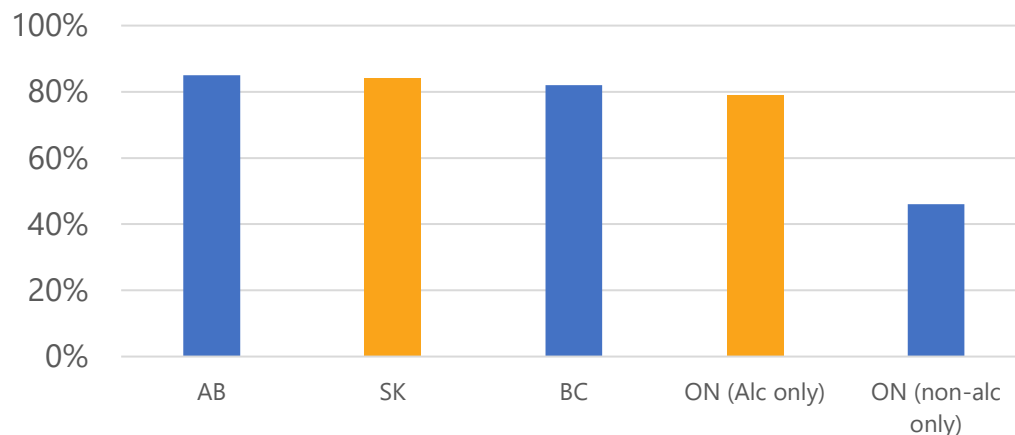


Lessons Learned

Key Lessons Learned in 30 years



Provincial Recycling Rates – Western Provinces and Ontario: Non-refillable Containers 2019



1. Results-based regulations are key. Then let industry have the flexibility to implement in the most cost efficient manner possible.
2. There should be one beverage container PRO, inclusive of alcohol and non-alcohol to maximize program efficiencies
3. A deposit return program can exist and work cooperatively with a curbside program (sampling curbside materials for UBCs).
4. The deposit must be meaningful enough to induce consumers to reclaim it.
5. The deposit should be harmonized within the province and across beverage containers to maximize operation efficiencies and transparency and minimize costs.
6. A variety of collection options must be employed to maximize convenience and minimize cost to the consumer
7. PRO should be not-for-profit to keep shelf price low
8. Return-to-Retail should be voluntary

