

News Releases

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Environment, Energy & Forestry

GOVERNMENT TO LIFT “CAN-BAN” MAY 3 BEVERAGE CONTAINER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ENCOURAGES RETURNS AND RECYCLING

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI -- Beginning May 3, the provincial government will be lifting its ban on the sale of carbonated beverage in non-refillable containers. In its place, the Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry is implementing a program of deposit and return for all beverage containers (except dairy containers) sold at Island retailers.

“There has been a strong consumer demand over the years for beverages sold in a variety of types of container – metal, plastic, glass or carton. This system allows those containers to be available while giving the consumer an incentive to bring the container back for recycling,” said George Webster, Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

“This province already has Canada’s best recycling system and great cooperation from Islanders in making sure recyclables are dealt with responsibly. That allows Prince Edward Island to handle a greater variety of containers without a negative environmental impact.”

With the introduction of the Beverage Container Act in the legislature this week, government has begun the process of lifting restrictions on the types of beverage containers sold in Prince Edward Island. Grocers and beverage distributors have indicated that they expect to have the new products widely available when the restrictions are lifted.

Under the new system, consumers will pay a 10 cent deposit on each beverage container they purchase and receive a five cent refund for each container when it is returned to one of the 10 licensed Container Recycling Depots located across the province. For alcoholic beverage containers larger than 500 millilitres, there will be a 20 cent deposit levied and a 10 cent refund available when the container is returned to a depot.

As of May 3, retail stores will no longer accept returned beverage containers or pay refunds.

The deposit and return system will apply to all ready-to-drink beverage containers except those used for dairy products, milk substitutes or nutritional supplements.

Two and a half cents from each container will be used to fund environmental work carried out by the Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry. The remaining two and a half cents will be used to pay for system administration.

“The environment funds will make sure that the deposits paid by consumers are used to carry out beneficial environmental projects – including pollution prevention and watershed protection,” said Minister Webster.

Government estimates that Prince Edward Island’s new Beverage Container Management System will process approximately 50 million recyclable containers and 18 million refillable containers each year.

BACKGROUND

Q and A - Prince Edward Island’s Beverage Container Management System

Why is the law on beverage containers being changed?

The changes are a response to consumer demand. With the great success of the Waste Watch program in encouraging recycling, a wide variety of beverage containers can be handled in an environmentally-friendly way. The expansion of the deposit-return system gives an extra incentive to make sure containers are recycled and reduces the likelihood of containers ending up as roadside litter.

Why can’t containers be returned to retail stores as was done with refillable bottles?

There will be an anticipated 50,000,000 recyclable containers and 18,000,000 refillable containers handled by the beverage container management system each year. It’s not reasonable to expect stores to make room for that much material. After May 3, all returns must be made at one of the Island’s licensed Container Recycling Depots.

What containers are included in the system?

All ready-to-drink beverage containers, up to five litres in volume, will be covered by the Beverage Container Management System – with the exception of containers used for dairy products, milk substitutes like soy and rice milk, and nutritional supplements.

What about the current refillable bottles?

Refillables are still allowed under the Beverage Container Management System. Government expects that some refillables – notably glass beer bottles – will remain available over the long term, while others may be phased out. The decision about what containers to use lies with the bottlers and distributors.

What will this cost Islanders?

The average Islander will spend \$1.50 a month on this system, after paying out \$3.00 in deposits and getting back \$1.50 in returns. Of the remaining money, 75 cents goes to system costs and 75 cents goes to an environment fund.

Why do I have to pay a deposit on juice packs for school lunches?

The system is modelled after existing programs in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where they charge a deposit on all such containers. Harmonization is important to prevent cross border shipment of empty containers to get a refund when no deposit was paid. The tetra pack containers are very difficult to recycle and must currently be shipped to Korea for recycling. The cost of this deposit would be 25 cents per week for a child drinking a juice box each day, provided containers are returned for refund.

Who is running the system?

There are a number of private companies under contract to deliver the Beverage Container Management System. Encorp PEI will be system administrator, Label Construction and Sanitation will be system operator and 10 Container Recycling Depots will be in charge of receiving and sorting returned containers.

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