



PROGRAM OVERVIEW RECYCLING WHERE I LIVE RECYCLING RESOURCES

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SHIFTING COLLECTION OF FILM PLASTIC FROM CURBSIDE TO DEPOTS

When plastic film, or plastic bags and overwrap, is collected with other materials at the curb or in multi-family recycling collection, pieces of the other recyclables—printed papers, paper packaging and aluminum, steel, and rigid plastic containers—mix with the plastic film. Once these materials are mixed together, it is difficult to completely separate the other recyclables from the plastic film to meet the standards of North American recycling markets. Plastic film that cannot meet market quality requirements is either used as fuel, directed to disposal, or shipped to Asia for sorting with local disposal of the sorted residue.

When MMBC developed its Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Plan, MMBC carefully considered the available markets for packaging and printed paper. As a result of this assessment, MMBC made two decisions about how it would handle plastic film in its collection system so that the plastic film would meet North American recycling market specifications.

1. MMBC asked collectors to remove plastic film from curbside and multi-family collection systems to avoid commingling with other recyclables. Keeping plastic film segregated from all other types of packaging and printed paper (PPP) avoids contaminating the plastic film with other recyclables and avoids contaminating other recyclables with plastic film.
2. MMBC asked collectors to accept only certain types of plastic film—# 2 and # 4 polyethylene—as these types of film are recyclable when mixed together. If any other types of films (for example, multi-layer films) are mixed

with # 2 and # 4 polyethylene, the mixture is not accepted at North American plastic film recycling end-markets.

The changes implemented by MMBC are intended to:

- Increase the amount of plastic film recycled
- Produce plastic film that meets specifications of recycling end-markets
- Avoid sending mixed plastic film to Asia for manual sorting with local disposal of the unrecyclable portion
- Avoid using plastic film as alternate fuel
- Increase recycling rates for printed papers and steel, aluminum and rigid plastic containers by preventing plastic film from contaminating these materials

MMBC has been working to educate depot collectors and residents on the types of recyclable film that are accepted and the types of unrecyclable film that are not accepted to ensure that the plastic film that is collected can meet market specifications and be effectively recycled.

Examples of plastic film that are accepted in MMBC's packaging and printed paper recycling program include:

- Plastic bags for groceries, dry cleaning, bread, newspapers and flyers
- Bags for produce, pre-washed salad, dry bulk foods and frozen vegetables
- Outer bags and wrap for diaper and feminine hygiene products, paper towels, tissues and soft drink can flats
- Bags for water softener salt, wood pellets and garden products
- Overwrap on mattresses, furniture and electronic equipment

Examples of plastic that is NOT accepted in MMBC's packaging and printed paper recycling program include:

- Crinkly cellophane wrap, e.g. for tea, floral arrangements
- Kitchen stretch wrap or plastic wrap for meat, poultry, fish or cheese
- Zipper-lock bags
- Chip or snack bags
- Plastic shipping envelopes
- Bubble packaging
- Plastic bags labelled biodegradable or compostable
- Multi-layer, laminated plastic packaging, e.g. for bacon, deli meats, cheese slices, etc.
- Lumber or construction wrap
- Garbage bags (all colours)

For more information about materials accepted in MMBC's packaging and printed paper recycling program, visit:

<http://recyclinginbc.ca/program/mmbc-materials-list/>