



## GLASS FACT SHEET

When food waste collection begins in October 2010, household glass food and beverage containers will no longer be accepted in the RDN blue box recycling program. Although glass has been included in the blue box for almost 20 years, after balancing the social, economic and environmental impacts associated with this issue, the Regional Board decided in October 2009 that removing glass from the blue box to enable food waste collection was an acceptable and sustainable trade-off.

### BACKGROUND

In the past, curbside recyclables were sorted into separate compartments in the collection vehicle. Clear glass was recycled into new glass containers; coloured glass was crushed and used as construction aggregate.

Glass containers have largely been replaced by plastics because they are cheaper to produce and transport. BC's last facility for glass recycling closed in 2008, which means that glass is no longer recycled into new containers in this province. Glass in the RDN curbside recycling program was collected at a cost and sent to a local processing facility where it was crushed for use as construction aggregate.

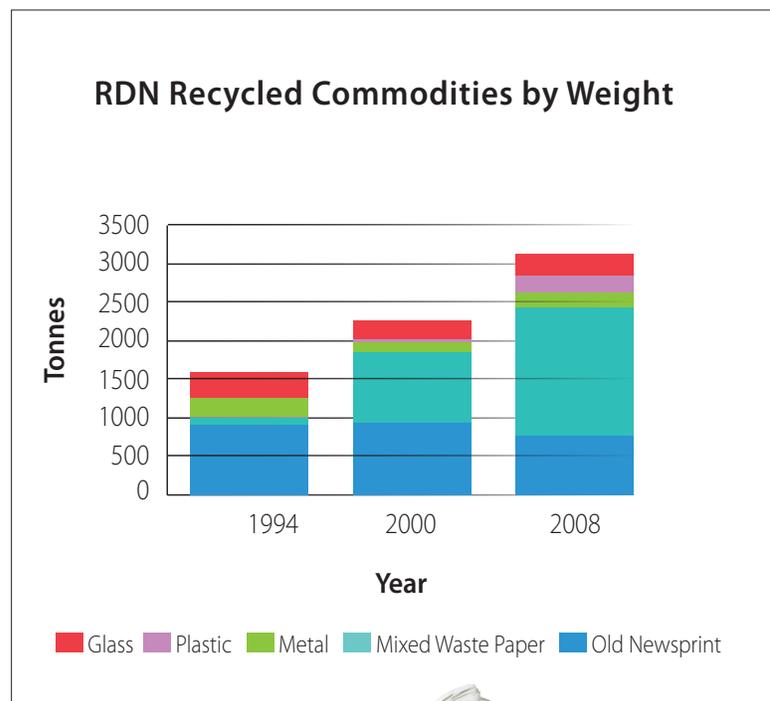
The amount of recyclable material collected in the RDN blue box program has increased with the addition of cardboard, mixed paper, and household plastic containers. As show in Figure 1, glass has become a smaller part of curbside recyclables, while mixed paper and plastic containers have increased. In 2009, the RDN blue box program collected 220 tonnes of glass in 2009, however, an estimated 35% of this amount represented glass containers that could have been returned for refund.

Today, most recycling programs on Vancouver Island, including the City of Nanaimo, don't accept glass at curbside. Lack of markets has made glass very costly to collect. As well, if broken in transit, glass contaminates higher value commodities such as paper and plastic

### THE SUSTAINABILITY CASE FOR DISCONTINUING GLASS IN THE BLUE BOX PROGRAM

Discontinuing glass collection coincides with the introduction of new collection vehicles to support the Green Bin Program. This allows either food waste and garbage or food waste and recyclables to be collected in separate compartments in a single vehicle. Recyclables are delivered to a materials recovery facility where they are mechanically sorted and processed.

Figure 1.



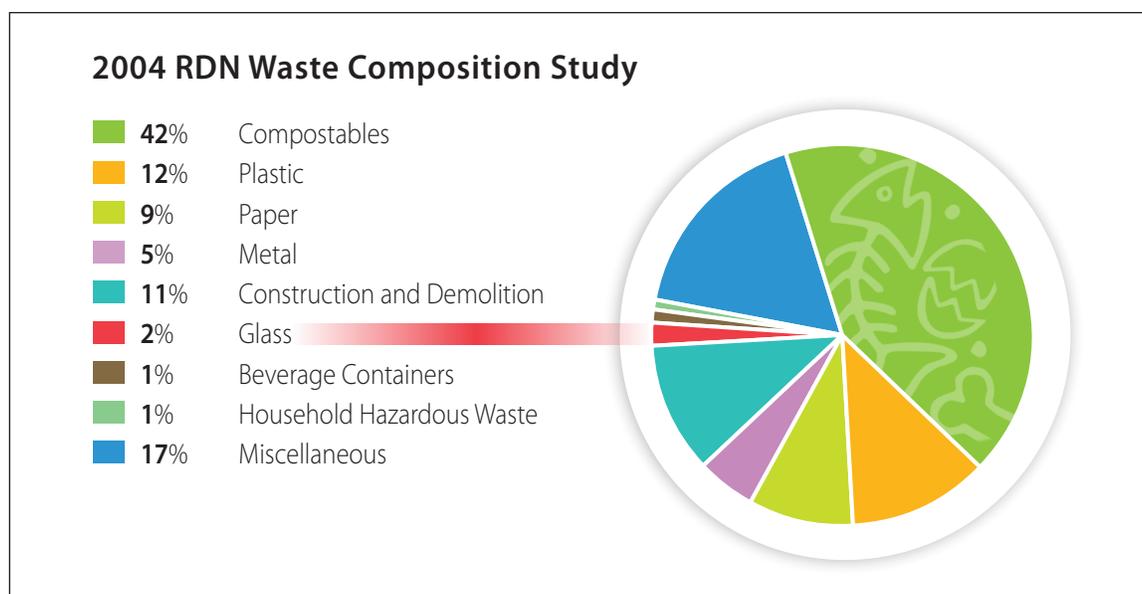


The RDN recognizes residents' concerns that removing container glass from the blue box program may appear at odds with the region's zero waste philosophy. This is not the case. On balance the environmental and economic benefits of this decision far outweigh the social impact and the corresponding need to adjust attitudes and behaviours.

From an environmental perspective, removing glass from the blue box, which represents only 5% of blue box materials, results in fuel and emissions savings due to the use of fewer trucks. From an economic perspective, removing container glass from the blue box facilitates the cost-effective diversion of 3,000 tonnes of food waste annually from the landfill. Given that the diversion of this highly polluting material from the landfill may result in the disposal of an additional 140 tonnes (of glass), the benefits far outweigh the social costs.

Unlike food waste, glass is an inert material that does not decompose in the landfill to produce leachate and emit harmful greenhouse gases. As shown in Figure 2, compostable food waste and paper comprise more than 50% of the region's waste stream. Implementing the Green Bin Program will result in significant landfill diversion and produce a sustainable and beneficial resource – compost.

**Figure 2:** RDN Waste Composition Study



### OPTIONS FOR NON-DEPOSIT GLASS DISPOSAL OR RECYCLING

With glass no longer accepted as a curbside recyclable, it is important to return deposit glass containers such as pop, juice, wine, beer, and liquor bottles to a Return-It Centre for refund. Non-deposit glass containers such as jars and condiment bottles are not banned from disposal. Glass containers, which cannot be returned for refund or are unsuitable for reuse, can be placed in the garbage.

Individuals wishing to drop-off non-deposit glass for use in on-site construction projects at the Regional Landfill can take glass containers to:

Facility	Location	Fee
Church Road Transfer Station	860 Church Road, Parksville	\$5.00
Parksville Bottle Depot	611A Alberni Hwy, Parksville	Free
Nanaimo Recycling Exchange	2477 Kenworth Road, Nanaimo	Free
Gabriola Island Recycling Organization	700 Tin Can Alley, Gabriola	Free
Regional Landfill	1105 Cedar Road, Nanaimo	\$5.00



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