

## History of Recycling (cont.)

Another tale states that when Mr. Ludolph went to choose a container he had his pick of three colours: white, black or blue. For no deep-rooted or special reason Mr. Ludolph selected the blue box. Seeing as this story came from "the father of Blue Box recycling" himself, it would seem to be the correct answer. Recyclers have stayed with the colour blue because it is easily distinguished from its surroundings. In summer, the blue allows the boxes to be spotted against the greens and other earth tones of the season. During the winter, the container stands out against a background of snow and ice. Blue is also an aesthetically pleasing colour to most people; few would object to having a Blue Box in their kitchen or garage.

Dispersal of the Blue Box across the province was fuelled by many factors. Growing environmental awareness was and still is one of the biggest influences. The cost of landfilling waste is another reason for municipalities to seek waste diversion methods. Another major influence was the soft drink industry. The Ontario Soft Drink Association wanted to increase the percentage of non-returnable soft drink containers. More specifically, bottlers wished to increase the percentage of cans being sold and replace large capacity glass bottles with safer two litre plastic containers. What followed was a long series of political and legislative arguing and consultations between government agencies, environmentalists and soft drink producers. Although much debate still rages over the outcome, the most important point is a deal was struck by the federal government, individual municipalities and the soft drink industry, through Ontario Multi-Material Recycling Incorporated (O.M.M.R.I.). Each agreed to pay one third of the cost to start a Blue Box program in municipalities across the province. This deal was instrumental in helping the Blue Box spread into more and more Ontario homes.

Some people feel the aforementioned deal is more than fair; others see it as a way of passing-the-buck. Regardless, recycling has proven to be a viable means of diverting waste from landfills and raising public awareness; the little blue containers help educate people to adjust their lifestyles and habits. Most of the deliberation surrounding Blue Box systems revolves around who should pay for the service; the public who use the cans and other materials or the manufacturers producing these materials? This is one area where careful consideration of the facts is needed.



Some areas or situations render a plastic box undesirable. An alternative is the Blue Bag. One version of this is a blue transparent plastic bag used to hold mixed recyclables. Like a box, the bag is left at the curbside. Collection can be carried out in conjunction with garbage pick up or separately. Most Blue Bag systems resemble garbage collection; the bags are loaded into the collection vehicle and then compacted. This can lead to the negative aspect of bagged recyclables. Depending upon the mix of materials being gathered, too much compaction can create contamination. Glass can break making its way into plastics or metals.

Liquids trapped in cans and containers can cause paper products to become wet. There is also the problem of opening the bags at the separation facility, dividing the compacted materials and deciding who should pay for the bags.