

British Columbia, Canada's Product Stewardship Principles

In light of the strategic direction toward producer financed and operated programs, the following fundamental principles establish this direction and will guide the process of reviewing existing programs and developing new product stewardship programs.

1. Producer/User Responsibility

- Responsibility for waste management is shifted from general taxpayers to producers and users.
- Responsibility is not shifted to other levels of government without consent.

2. Level Playing Field

- All brand-owners for a particular product category are subject to the same stewardship responsibilities.
- All consumers have reasonable access to product collection facilities.

3. Results-based

- Programs focus on results and provide brand-owners with flexibility to determine the most cost-effective means of achieving the desired outcomes with minimum government involvement.
- Product categories are clearly defined to simplify compliance and enforcement and ensure common understanding among program participants.
- Programs are tailored for individual products and encourage continued innovation by producers to minimize environmental impacts during all stages of the product lifecycle, from product design to end-of-life management.

4. Transparency and Accountability

- Program development process is open and provides the opportunity for input to all stakeholders.
- Industry is accountable to both government and consumers for environmental outcomes and allocation of revenue from fees/levies.

SOURCE: British Columbia Industry Product Stewardship Business Plan 2002/2003 – 2004/2005, September 30, 2002. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/ips/progdev/busplan.html>

EPR in British Columbia

British Columbia is the North American leader in the development of extended producer responsibility programs. In BC, extended producer responsibility (EPR) is defined as “a management system based on industry and consumers taking life-cycle responsibility for the products they produce and use.” EPR extends the responsibility of producers (defined as manufacturers, brand-owners, first importers or first sellers of products in BC) to the end-of-life or “waste” phase of a product’s life cycle. This is a shift away from government-managed, taxpayer-financed waste management programs. Full producer responsibility internalizes all waste management costs in the price of products, creating market-based incentives for producers to re-design their products to be more recyclable or resource-efficient.

The regulatory authority for requiring industry to assume the responsibility for product stewardship is provided by the Recycling Regulation (2004) (under the Environmental Management Act). The regulation requires producers to take full responsibility for managing their products at end-of-life under a product stewardship plan submitted to and approved by the director. The regulation is results based and sets targets and expected outcomes that are consistent with the ministry’s Product Stewardship Business Plan and other ministry policies. Producers are responsible for determining how their programs are funded and managed. Today, the province has established EPR programs for beverage containers, used oil/filters/containers, paint, pesticides, flammable liquids, gasoline, medications, tires and electronics.