



Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags

April 2008

French version prevails



Association
des détaillants
en alimentation
du Québec



Conseil
canadien des
distributeurs en
alimentation

Canadian
Council of
Grocery
Distributors



CONSEIL QUÉBÉCOIS DU
COMMERCE DE DÉTAIL

30 ans
pour du détail



Eco Entreprises Québec





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Foreword

Retailers recognize their role in the distribution of shopping bags and the influence they can exercise in reducing the quantity of bags in circulation.

They would like to have recognized the measures they have already put in place to reduce the number of single-use shopping bags in circulation, notably the distribution of millions of reusable bags since 2006.

Retailers appreciate the efforts consumers already make to reuse single-use shopping bags, notably as lunch sacks or for garbage disposal.

By shouldering their fair share of responsibilities, retailers are committed to reducing the environmental impact of shopping bags.

Retailers also encourage initiatives undertaken by other stakeholders who accept their share of responsibility, particularly various levels of government, municipalities, salvagers, recyclers, as well as consumers and residents.

Retailers will subscribe to this Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags as long as the status quo remains in effect with regard to regulating the use of shopping bags and to give the Code time to reach its objectives.

This Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags will be applicable for an initial period of four years, i.e. from April 2008 through March 2012.

Background

A number of issues are involved in single-use shopping bags, notably with regard to curbside recycling and sustainable development. Single-use shopping bags are generally defined as bags made of paper or plastic, provided to consumers for transporting products. Consumers' interest in these bags is evident, which contributes to increasing the generation of packaging used in Québec. In fact, according to ÉÉQ estimates, around 15,000 tonnes of plastic shopping bags are distributed every year in the province, representing about 2% of all recyclable materials generated by households.

The main environmental impact of shopping bags, no matter their composition, is the energy and the resources required to produce and transport them, in addition to the resources needed to eliminate or recycle them at the end of their useful life. In the end, the whole lifecycle of the product should be considered to determine its real impact on the environment.

Lifecycle analysis of shopping bags confirm that the best way to reduce their impact is to distribute fewer of them. Using reusable bags for carrying purchases is the second best option to encourage. Finally, the impact of those single-use bags that are produced can be reduced by encouraging consumers to reuse them for other purposes as well as to send them to be recycled and recovered. Lifecycle analysis show that the 4R principle — reduce, reuse, recycle, recover — is applicable to single-use shopping bags.

The approach adopted in Québec is the voluntary support of a Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags to promote greater commitment not only to the objectives established, but also to the very principles of reducing, reusing, recycling and recovering single-use shopping bags. Québec would like to have all single-use bags better managed rather than focusing only on those made of plastic materials. Québec would like to spur real behavioural change among its retailers and consumers rather than simply shifting consumer habits towards bags made from different materials.

Voluntary Code of Best Practices
for the Use of Shopping Bags

1. Retailer Initiatives

Retailers are well aware that the issue of single-use shopping bags is of increasing concern to the population and government. Despite their relatively small quantities, these bags have become a symbol of our overconsumption.

In cooperation with publicly-owned RECYC-QUÉBEC and Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ), retailers are taking the initiative to voluntarily reduce the quantity of single-use bags they put into circulation as well as to promote their reuse, recycling and recovery. They also are working to heighten awareness among various stakeholders, including consumers, on best practices to be applied to shopping bags.

This Code is based on RECYC-QUÉBEC's Technical Notice regarding the environmental impact of shopping bags, published in November 2007, that reviewed a series of issues of concern to retailers. Adherence to the Code is voluntary and the application of the 4R principle (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) is its driving force. It is one of a series of practical actions, including the marketing of several million reusable bags, that were undertaken by distributors and retailers these past years.

Partners involved in this initiative include

- The Association des détaillants en alimentation du Québec (A.D.A.)
- the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD)
- the Québec Retail Council (CQCD)
- Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ)
- RECYC-QUÉBEC.

¹ RECYC-QUÉBEC (2007) Technical Notice – Shopping Bags – Environmental Assessment. 32 pages.

2. Objectives and Measures

The main goal of the Voluntary Code of Best Practices is to reduce the quantity of shopping bags sent for elimination each year in Québec. To reach that goal, the partners have identified the following objectives:

1. Support a reduction in the number of single-use bags distributed
2. Promote the use of reusable bags and other durable containers
3. Encourage the reuse of shopping bags
4. Promote the recovery and recycling of shopping bags
5. Ensure consistent efforts are made to inform, heighten awareness and educate people regarding best practices.

Each objective encompasses a series of measures to be adopted by various stakeholders according to individual resources and means. Retailer associations will promote the Code to their members who will be urged to implement the measures presented.

Measure 1:

Encourage retailers to subscribe to the Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags.

To be applied by:

Retailer associations

Voluntary Code of Best Practices
for the Use of Shopping Bags

Support a *REDUCTION* in the number of single-use bags distributed

Reducing the use of shopping bags at source can be accomplished in a number of ways. The measures described are designed for retailers, their employees and customers.

Measure 2:

Favour the use of bags with volume, resistance and density characteristics appropriate to the intended use.

To be applied by:

Retailers, in cooperation with the Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA)

Measure 3:

Offer alternatives to bags, such as stickers, when only a few articles or larger items are purchased.

To be applied by:

Retailers

Measure 4:

Charge for providing single-use shopping bags.

To be applied by:

Retailers

Measure 5:

Heighten employee awareness about the importance of reducing the number of single-use shopping bags offered and educate them on how they can reduce the number of bags distributed.

To be applied by:

Retailers

Measure 6:

Inform customers about the establishment's commitment to reducing the number of single-use shopping bags and make them aware of the issue through, for example, posters at the point of sale or information on cash register receipts.

To be applied by:

Retailers, in cooperation with RECYC-QUÉBEC and ÉEQ as part of the Do Good Do Green campaign

Promote the use of *REUSABLE BAGS* and other durable containers

2. Objectives and Measures

The use of more durable bags and containers should be encouraged to promote reuse.

Measure 7:

Offer customers durable alternatives to single-use shopping bags.

The most popular alternatives are transport bins and bags made of cloth or durable plastic.

To be applied by:

Retailers

Measure 8:

Heighten customer awareness about the use of durable bags and bins.

To be applied by:

Retailers

Measure 9:

Promote measures and incentives (cash returns, reward programs, and so forth) for customers who use their own durable bags and bins.

To be applied by:

Retailers

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Encourage the *REUSE* of shopping bags

2. Objectives and Measures

Though they were originally designed to be used only once, single-use bags can be used again in many different ways. Customers should be urged to reuse the bags as many times as possible before disposing of them.

Measure 10:

Heighten customer awareness about reusing single-use bags.

To be applied by:

Retailers, in cooperation with RECYC-QUÉBEC and ÉEQ as part of the Do Good Do Green campaign.

Measure 11:

Promote measures and incentives (cash returns, reward programs, and so forth) for customers who reuse single-use shopping bags.

To be applied by:

Retailers.

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Promote the *RECOVERY* and *RECYCLING* of shopping bags

2. Objectives and Measures

Shopping bags offer excellent potential for recycling at the end of their useful lives. The measures to be implemented should facilitate the recovery and recycling of shopping bags.

Measure 12:

Encourage residents to recycle bags and educate them as to the correct way to recover recyclable plastic bags, i.e. by turning them inside out to remove other materials and putting them all in one bag.

To be applied by:

RECYC-QUÉBEC and ÉEQ as part of the Do Good Do Green campaign, in cooperation with retailers and the CPIA.

Measure 13:

In accordance with applicable standards, choose to distribute bags made of recycled and recyclable content and clearly indicate that information on the bags.

To be applied by:

Retailers, in cooperation with RECYC-QUÉBEC and the CPIA.

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Ensure consistent efforts are made to *INFORM, HEIGHTEN AWARENESS* and *EDUCATE* people regarding best practices

Other than previously mentioned measures to inform, heighten awareness and educate, other strategies should be implemented to maximize the effects of the Voluntary Code of Best Practices.

Measure 14:

Develop a visual on the issue of shopping bags and integrate it in the national Do Good, Do Green campaign.

To be applied by:

ÉEQ, in cooperation with RECYC-QUÉBEC

Measure 15:

Encourage the use of the visual developed for the Do Good, Do Green campaign at the point of sale to heighten customer awareness of best practices related to shopping bags.

To be applied by:

Retailers, in cooperation with ÉEQ

Measure 16:

Promote successes using partners' information vehicles (websites, electronic newsletters, etc.)

To be applied by:

Retailer associations, ÉEQ and RECYC-QUÉBEC

3. Follow-up and Reporting

A number of strategies will be used to ensure the Voluntary Code of Best Practices is updated and the results of its application are measured.

Measure 17:

Survey the population on behavioural changes they adopted as a result of the initiatives undertaken by partners who subscribed to the Voluntary Code of Best Practices.

To be applied by:

ÉEQ, in cooperation with RECYC-QUÉBEC

Measure 18:

On an annual basis and in cooperation with retailers, conduct point of sale research, such as surveys and audits, to assess the impact of measures implemented locally by retailers.

To be applied by:

ÉEQ and RECYC-QUÉBEC, in cooperation with retailers

Measure 19:

On an annual basis and according to resources and means available, assess retailers' adherence to the Voluntary Code of Best Practices and present to the Ministry, Développement durable, Environnement et Parcs, a progress report on actions undertaken.

To be applied by:

Retailers' associations

Measure 20:

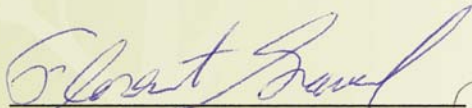
Present to the Ministry, Développement durable, Environnement et Parcs, a report on the impact of the Voluntary Code of Best Practices no later than three months after the end of the application period, i.e. June 30, 2012.

To be applied by:

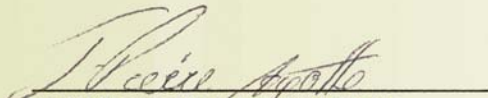
Retailers' associations, RECYC-QUÉBEC and ÉEQ

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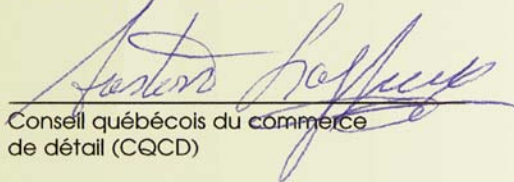
Signatories to the Voluntary Code of Best Practices
on the Use of Shopping Bags.



Association des détaillants en alimentation
du Québec (A.D.A.)

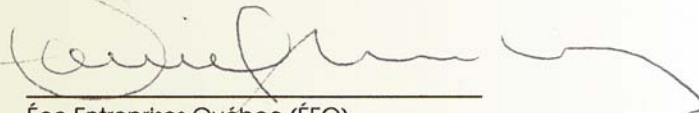


* Conseil canadien des distributeurs
en alimentation (CCDA)

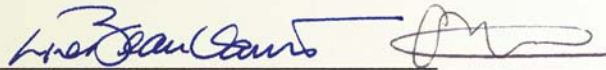


Conseil québécois du commerce
de détail (CQCD)


* CCGD (Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors)



Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ)



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