The Development of Packaging EPR in the USA, Canada and Mexico

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July, 2023

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The Development of Packaging EPR in the USA, Canada and Mexico	
About The Author	3
Unlocking Market Access	4
1. Introduction	6
2. USA	6
California	9
Colorado	10
Maine	10
Maryland	12
New Jersey	12
Oregon	13
Washington State	
3. Canada	15
4. Mexico	22
5. Conclusion	23
6. Referenced Legislation	23





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1. Introduction

Although packaging extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems are present in many developed and developing economies such as the EU and South Korea, the adoption of similar systems in countries such as the USA, Mexico and even in Canada has been somewhat slower.

Despite this, momentum is growing and proposals for the implementation of EPR and packaging requirements in these countries are becoming more topical and gaining more support as these countries look for ways to tackle waste and move towards a circular economy.

This whitepaper examines the development of packaging EPR requirements in the USA, Canada and Mexico. It provides an overview of current and upcoming requirements for packaging producers in the electronic and textile industries.

2. USA

In January 2021, "Senate Bill 3263" and "House Bill 5845", which aimed to make packaging producers fiscally responsible for collecting, recycling and managing packaging waste after consumer use, were abandoned after failing to receive enough support from either house. Even though this attempt to introduce packaging EPR requirements at a federal level failed, it does not signify a lack of packaging EPR requirements in the USA.

Since no federal packaging law is in place, a number of states have begun enacting their own rules for packaging. Presently, seven states have approved some form of packaging EPR or packaging requirements: California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Oregon, New Jersey and Washington State.

Crucially, the approaches taken by each state differ significantly, as evidenced by the





variances in product scopes and exemptions listed in each state's EPR system.

A breakdown of these differences is available in the table below.

State	Legislation	Products in scope	Products exempted
California	SB 54 (Allen,	Single-use packaging	Packaging used for Medical products;
	et al)	(primary, secondary, tertiary).	Plastic packaging for transporting dangerous goods;
			Packaging used to contain hazardous or flammable products;
			Packaging used for the long-term protection or storage of a product that has a lifespan of not less than five years;
			Packaging meeting the requirements of 42041 (2) (H) (i).
Colorado	HB 22-1355 (Cutter et al)	"Packaging material" means any material, regardless of recyclability, that is intended for single or short-term use and is used for the containment, protection, handling, or	Packaging materials intended for long-term storage/protection of a durable product and that are intended to transport, protect, or store the product for at least five years. Paper products that, through their use, could become unsafe or unsanitary to handle. Packaging material used exclusively in
		delivery of products to the consumer at the point of sale, including through an internet transaction.	 industrial or manufacturing processes. Packaging material used to contain a product that is regulated as a medical device. Packaging material used to contain a portable electronic device, as defined in section 10-4-1501, that has been repaired and reconditioned to be sold as a refurbished product.
Maine	LD 1541 / HP 1146 (Grohoski, Dill)	Primary, secondary, tertiary packaging.	Packaging for the long-term storage or protection of a durable product. Further exemptions are expected. The law provides exemptions for producers as well as exemptions for the packaging associated with certain products. Producers with less than \$2,000,000 in gross annual revenue are exempt; producers whose Maine sales were packaged in less than 1 ton of packaging are exempt; producers that realized

Table 1. on packaging in scope and exempted in each state's EPR scheme.

Maryland	SB 222	Primary, secondary, and	more than 50% of their total gross revenue from the sale of goods acquired through insurance salvages, closeouts, bankruptcies and liquidations are exempt; and producers of perishable food selling products with less than 15 tons of total packaging are exempt. Drug and medical device packaging.
	(Augustine et al.)	tertiary packaging intended for the consumer market.	
Oregon	SB 582 (Dembrow)	Materials used for the containment or protection of products, including but not limited to paper, plastic, glass or metal or a mixture thereof; Single-use bags, including but not limited to shopping bags; Nondurable materials used in storage, shipping or moving, including but not limited to packing materials, moving boxes, file boxes and folders.	Rigid pallets and certain specialty packaging items. Until 30 June 2023, Oregon is taking product exemption requests.
New Jersey	SB 2515 (Smith et al)	Rigid plastic containers; Polystyrene loose fill packaging.	Products destined for shipment outside the State; Containers for drugs, dietary supplements, medical devices, or cosmetics as defined in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act; Containers for toxic or hazardous products regulated under the "Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act; Containers manufactured for use in the shipment of hazardous materials, reusable containers.
Washington State	SB 5022 (Das et al)	Expanded polystyrene void filling packaging	N/A





Despite the differences between each state's approach there are some similarities. For instance California, Colorado, Maine and Oregan have enacted legislation which introduce eco-modulation principles thereby requiring producer responsibility organizations (PRO's) to provide lower fees to packaging producers who have implemented eco-design principles in their packaging.

Another feature notable throughout each piece of legislation is the need for further regulation or supporting measures. In the case of California a supporting regulation is set to be published by 1 January 2025, while Maine is anticipated to release technical rules for its EPR scheme in the summer of 2024.

An overview of each state's approach and stage of EPR implementation is set out in the following sections of this whitepaper.

California

In June 2022, California signed the Plastic Pollution Producer Responsibility Act (Senate Bill 54), a landmark new packaging law that requires by 2032:

- 100% of packaging in the state is to be recyclable or compostable;
- 25% cut in plastic packaging;
- 65% of all single-use plastic packaging is recycled.

The law shifts the packaging pollution burden from consumers to producers. The Bill directs producers to create a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) and to implement an EPR program in which producers design, fund, and operate a statewide program that properly collects and recycles or composts.

A supporting Regulation is set to be published by **1 January 2025**.





Colorado

On 10 August 2022, the Colorado Producer Responsibility Program for Statewide Recycling House Bill 22-1355 entered into force. The Bill requires companies to pay for recycling programmes for their containers, packaging, and printed paper.

The Bill establishes a number of deadlines for producers:

- From **1 January 2025**, and each January 1st thereafter, as an alternative to participating in the programme, a producer may submit an individual plan proposal to the advisory board.
- On or before **30 June 2026**, and on each June 30th thereafter, the department will notify the organization (designate a nonprofit organization) of its costs in overseeing and enforcing the programme, and the organization will transmit a portion of the producer responsibility dues to the fund for the purposes of reimbursing the department for its costs.
- From 1 July 2025, a producer may not sell or distribute any products that use covered materials in the state unless the producer is participating in the programme or, after 1 January 2029, as set forth in the final plan or another plan approved by the executive director.

Although Colorado has selected the "Circular Action Alliance" as its producer responsibility organization, the recycling programme will be developed over the next few years.

Maine

In July 2021, Maine passed the first packaging EPR Act in the US. The Act known as "An Act to Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money" (LD 1541 / HP 1146) entered into force on 18 October 2021.



The Act establishes a stewardship programme for packaging, where producers of products will pay into a fund based on the amount and the recyclability of packaging associated with their products. The program will be operated by a stewardship organization that is yet to be selected.

Producer exemptions are provided for:

- Producers that realized less than \$2,000,000 in total gross revenue during the prior calendar year, except that, for the period beginning one calendar year following the effective date of the contract entered into by the department and the stewardship organization pursuant to subsection 3 and ending 3 years after that effective date, a producer that realized less than \$5,000,000 in total gross revenue during the prior calendar year is exempt from the requirements and prohibitions of this section;
- Producers which have sold, offered for sale or distributed for sale in or into the State during the prior calendar year products contained, protected, delivered, presented or distributed in or using less than one ton of packaging material in total; and
- Producers that realized more than 50% of its total gross revenue in the prior calendar year from the sale of goods it acquired through insurance salvages, closeouts, bankruptcies and liquidations.

The Act specifies that producers will be required to report annually to the stewardship organization on the total amount, whether by weight or volume, of each type of packaging material sold, offered for sale or distributed for sale in or into the State by the producer in the prior calendar year.

A producer or group of producers may develop and operate an alternative collection programme, further details on this measure are set out in Section 8 of the Act. Lastly, it is anticipated that technical rules for the programme will be adopted in **Summer 2024**.



Maryland

On 1 July 2023, Senate Bill 222 on Statewide Recycling Needs Assessment and Producer Responsibility for Packaging Materials entered into force. Despite earlier versions of the Bill containing measures for the submission of plans and the payment of fees by packaging producers, the version that entered into force was significantly redacted.

Under the current version of the Bill on or before **1 October 2023**, the Department of the Environment will approve a single PRO to represent the interests of producers. This PRO will then be required to make legislative recommendations on how to effectively establish and implement a producer responsibility programme in the state for packaging materials, on or before **1 December 2024**.

As set out in the Bill the upcoming programme will apply to "packaging materials", which are defined as primary, secondary, and tertiary packaging intended for the consumer market. Exemptions are provided for drug and medical device packaging.

New Jersey

On 18 January 2022, Senate Bill 2515 entered into force, thereby introducing certain plastic packaging prohibitions, as well as minimum recycled content requirements for rigid plastic packaging. The objective of the Bill is to encourage the development of recycling markets, by requiring manufacturers to utilize post-consumer recycled content.

Post-consumer recycled content requirements are being introduced on a phased basis and five years after the effective date of this act (18 January 2022), and every three years thereafter, the percentage of post-consumer recycled content required for rigid plastic containers shall increase by 5, 10 percent, until reaching 50 percent. Post-consumer recycled content measures are applicable to "rigid plastic containers", which are defined as "containers made of plastic that has a relatively inflexible finite



shape or form, has a minimum capacity of eight fluid ounces or its equivalent volume and a maximum capacity of five fluid gallons or its equivalent volume, and is capable of maintaining its shape while empty or while holding other products". Exemptions to this measure are provided for:

- Products destined for shipment outside the State;
- Containers for drugs, dietary supplements, medical devices, or cosmetics as defined in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act;
- Containers for toxic or hazardous products regulated under the "Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act;
- Containers manufactured for use in the shipment of hazardous materials;
- Reusable containers.

The Bill also requires manufacturers to register with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection from 18 July 2022, and annually thereafter. Furthermore, from June 2023, the Department will be accepting 2023 registrations on a rolling basis through the end of the year.

Crucially, from **18 January 2024**, no person shall sell or offer for sale in the State any polystyrene loose fill packaging otherwise known as plastic packaging peanuts. Manufacturers are required to submit first-year compliance reports by **18 July 2025**, and annually thereafter.

Oregon

On 1 January 2022, Oregon's plastic pollution and recycling modernization Act (Senate Bill 582) entered into force. Although the Act is now enacted, changes to Oregon's recycling programme are not set to enter into force until **July 2025**.

The Act has outlined a number of objectives, such as:

• Making recycling easier for the public to use;



- Expanding access to recycling services;
- Upgrading waste sorting facilities for recyclables; and
- Creating environmental benefits while reducing social and environmental harms, such as plastic pollution.

In order to meet these aims, the Act has established that producers and manufacturers of packaged items, paper products and food serviceware will be required to pay for the development of recycling infrastructure.

The Act outlines the following obligations for packaging producers:

- Each producer must register with and be a member of a producer responsibility organization that administers a producer responsibility program;
- A producer is required to pay an annual membership fee to a producer responsibility organization; and
- Upon request, provide the producer responsibility organization with records or other information.

Exemptions from the obligation to join a producer responsibility organization are provided for "small producers" who are defined as inter alia:

- As having a gross revenue of less than \$5 million for the organization's most recent fiscal year;
- Or have sold in or into Oregon less than one metric ton of covered products for use in this state in the most recent calendar year.

The start up stage of the Act is anticipated to span a number of years, as the state seeks to engage with interested parties on the development of further rules and regulations.



Washington State

On 25 July 2021, Senate Bill 5022 on recycling, waste, and litter reduction entered into force in Washington State. The Bill enacted a series of measures to reduce plastic waste and encourage recycling through the introduction of minimum post-consumer recycled content requirements. However, the majority of these obligations are specific to manufacturers of; plastic beverage containers, plastic trash bags, and household cleaning and personal care products in plastic containers.

Despite the limited scope of the Bill, from 1 June 2023, the sale and distribution of expanded polystyrene void filling packaging products, which means loose fill packaging material, also referred to as packing peanuts, in or into Washington state is prohibited. This measure therefore has the potential to impact manufacturers of many products outside the "covered products" list.

3. Canada

Canada utilizes a federal system of governance, where legislation is enacted at both a federal and provincial level.

Since a federal law on packaging EPR has yet to be enacted due to the varying infrastructure and population sizes present across the country, each Canadian Province and Territory has begun the process of introducing its own EPR requirements.

As a consequence of this each Province and Territory is at varying levels of EPR implementation and a number of EPR systems, product stewardship programmes and recycling schemes have appeared across the country.

An overview of the differing EPR systems in Canada is presented in the table below.



 Table 2. on Canadian EPR Systems.

EPR approach	Description		
EPR programme	 Identify end-of-life management of products as the responsibility of producers (e.g., brand owners, first importers or manufacturers). Funding is provided by producers. Costs can be internalized as a factor of production or may be passed on to consumers. 		
Product stewardship programme	 Allocate responsibility to provincial/territorial or municipal governments. Legislated environmental fees and/or public funds are commonly used as a funding base. Usually do not allocate financial responsibility to producers. 		
Recycling scheme	 Generally a residential recycling programme. 		

Despite these differing EPR systems, there are certain commonalities in each region's approach, as the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment has released a number of guidelines over recent years, in an effort to harmonize legal definitions and obligations for plastic EPR legislation.

These guidelines are also a part of the Ministry's efforts to transition provincial product stewardship programmes to full EPR programmes.

An overview of the varying schemes, as well as producer obligations in each Province and Territory is presented in the table below.



Province/Territory	Status of EPR implementation for packaging	Producer obligations	
Alberta	EPR Regulation is in the process of being developed and should be fully implemented in April 2025. Bylaws providing further EPR details are scheduled to be finalized by fall 2023.	Registration requirements were listed in Regulation 194/2022, further details are to be provided in supplementary legislation.	
		A producer must submit verification details of collection and management plans to the ARMA by 1 April 2024.	
		A producer must provide at no charge, by 1 April 2025, a common collection system to single-family/ multiple-family dwellings in communities registered with the Authority.	
		A producer must provide at no charge, by 1 October 2026, to single-family/ multiple-family dwellings in communities registered with the Authority that were not receiving recycling service from a community authority.	
		A producer must meet the material management requirements in Table 1 and those specified by upcoming bylaws.	
British Columbia	Has an EPR programme which is	A producer must either:	
	administered by Recycle BC.	 (a) Have an approved plan under Part 2 of Reg.449/2004 [Extended Producer Responsibility Plans] and comply with the approved plan, or 	
		(b) Comply with Part 3 of Reg.449/2004 [Extended Producer Responsibility Program Requirements if No Extended Producer Responsibility Plan]	

Table 3. on the Implementation of Packaging EPR in Canadian Provinces and Territories.



		 On or before July 1 in each year, a producer with an approved plan must: (a) Provide to a director a report respecting the one-year period ending not later than March 31 of that year or December 31 of the previous year, and (b) Post the report on the internet.
Manitoba	Has a stewardship programme which is administered by Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba Inc. (MMSM).	Stewards are required to submit a stewardship program plan proposal for approval by the Minister. Stewards are obligated to file and/or pay fees for all obligation years starting from the date the steward began supplying printed paper and packaging in Manitoba. Operators of stewardship programmes have further obligations, as set out in Regulation 195/2008 & Stewardship Rules, 2019.
New Brunswick	Recycle NB is set to oversee the upcoming packaging and paper products programme.	No brand owner shall sell, offer for sale or distribute packaging or paper to a person within the Province unless the brand owner is registered with the Board. Brand owners are required to register with Recycle NB. Submission of packaging and paper products stewardship plans. A brand owner may designate an agent to act on behalf of the brand owner with respect to the brand owner's obligations under this Regulation 2021/76. At least 90 days before the expiry date of a packaging and paper products stewardship plan approved or imposed by the Board, a brand owner shall submit a packaging and paper products stewardship plan to the Board for review and



		approval.
		Within two years of the approval of the initial stewardship plan, a brand owner shall submit for approval to the Board one or more performance measures to assess the goals and objectives of the brand owner's packaging and paper products stewardship plan.
		On or before April 30 in each year, a brand owner shall provide the Board with an annual report detailing the effectiveness of the packaging and paper products stewardship plan during the previous calendar year.
		When brand owners must submit their annual report, it shall provide a statement in writing as to the total amount of packaging and paper, by material type, distributed by it during the previous calendar year.
		Payment of Board costs etc.
Newfoundland and Labrador	Is in the process of conducting consultations to support the developments of an EPR programme for packaging.	N/A
Northwest Territories	Is reviewing responses to a consultation to amend the Waste Reduction and Recovery Act to enable an EPR programme.	N/A
Nova Scotia	Is consulting with stakeholders to expand the Province's extended producer responsibility (EPR) program to include packaging.	N/A
Nunavut	N/A	N/A
Ontario	Has a stewardship programme which is administered by Stewardship Ontario until 1 July 2023 when a complete EPR system begins.	Every producer shall establish and operate a system for managing blue box material in accordance with PART VI of Reg. 391/21.
		On or before December 31 of



		 each year, a producer shall account for a weight of recovered resources in each material category that meets or exceeds its management requirement for that material category. The minimum amount and recovery targets are set out in Section 42 of the Regulation. A producer shall report on the recovered resources for the previous calendar year. A producer of blue box material supplied to consumers in Ontario shall register with the Authority, through the Registry, by submitting the information required in subsection (3) within 30 days of becoming a producer. A producer shall submit an annual report to the Authority, through the Registry, through the Registry, through the Registry, through the Registry, that contains the information listed in Section 51 of the Regulation.
Prince Edward Island	N/A	N/A
<i>Québec</i>	Has an EPR system which is administered by Éco Entreprises Québec.	The owner of a brand may be required to pay a contribution pursuant to a schedule of contributions established under section 53.31.14 of the Environment Quality Act. All Targeted Persons <i>(a person</i> <i>obligated by the Compensation</i> <i>Regime)</i> must register and submit reports to ÉEQ.
Saskatchewan	On March 31, 2023, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment released an updated Household Packaging and Paper Stewardship Program Regulations, 2023, calling for a transition to a full Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programme for waste packaging. A draft programme plan is currently being developed for consultation with stakeholders.	Producers shall operate product stewardship programmes or enter into an agreement with a producer responsibility organization to operate such stewardship programmes on their behalf. Stewardship programs must be submitted for approval to the Ministry of Environment by September 27, 2023. Likewise, producers or producer organizations shall review their stewardship programs every five years and annually report on



		their activities by 30 June of each year.
Yukon	Is currently reviewing responses to a consultation on EPR for packaging.	N/A

In addition to supporting the development of a harmonized EPR approach to packaging across Canada, the government of Canada has recently announced its "zero plastic waste agenda". Unlike previous attempts to reduce packaging waste, the zero plastic waste agenda is set to be rolled out through a federal action plan.

Currently, the plan is proposing the adoption of two regulatory measures for plastic packaging:

- Minimum recycled content requirements for certain plastic packaging; and
- Recyclability and compostability labels.

Since the Canadian government sees plastic waste as a federal issue, the changes will be adopted as Regulations under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The Canadian government anticipates that the introduction of these federal regulations will speed up the adoption of EPR schemes in Provinces and Territories without them, by increasing citizen interest in recycling. An overview of each proposed requirement is provided in the table below.

Table 4. on proposed plastic packaging requirements.

Proposed requirement	Products in scope	Exemptions	Additional requirements
<i>Minimum recycled content requirements</i>	Rigid and flexible packaging	Small businesses. Durable, compostable, & long term use packaging. Packaging integral to a product.	Annual percentage targets for the period 2023-2030. Testing, record keeping and reporting required for demonstrating compliance.

Recyclability and compostability labels	Consumer-facing primary and secondary plastic packaging, as well as single-use plastics.	Packaging with a display surface of less than 15 cm2.	Restrictions on the usage of the "chasing arrows" symbol. Prohibition of the terms "biodegradable" or "degradable" Packaging to be tested & affixed with one of the following classifications; recyclable, non recyclable or collected. QR codes on a package's recyclability. Packaging labeled "compostable" needs 3rd party accreditation.
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4. Mexico

Similarly to the US and Canada, Mexico does not currently have a federal law on packaging EPR. Nevertheless proposals have been made to introduce EPR measures, through the amendment of the General Law for the Prevention and Integrated Management of Waste (LGPGIR).

Although many of the proposals to introduce packaging EPR requirements have a low enactment probability, the volume of proposals to enact new packaging measures is increasing and therefore warrants the attention of packaging producers.

If current proposals are approved they will lead to the:

- Establishment of EPR systems for the reuse and recycling of waste packaging;
- Prohibition of unnecessary packaging;
- Prohibitions for the sale and use of single-use plastic products;
- Oblige large generators of packaging waste to formulate and complete waste management plans;

- Replace plastic transport packaging, with packaging made of biodegradable, rapidly decomposing bioplastics; and
- Introduce public awareness campaigns for the better prevention of packaging waste.

5. Conclusion

Considering the increase in enacted and proposed packaging EPR legislation in the US, Canada, and to an extent Mexico, it is evident that producer requirements for packaging are set to increase across each country for a number of years. In particular plastic packaging requirements and prohibitions are being discussed in each country, as efforts to reduce plastic waste ramp up.

In addition to the growth of EPR consultations at a federal level, this whitepaper highlights the need for businesses to monitor their legal obligations at a state level, as legislation is developing at a rapid rate across US states and Canadian provinces, leading to a certain amount of legal divergence in countries.

It is also critical for producers to be aware that many US states are watching the progress of EPR requirements in neighbouring states, i.e. Connecticut, and plan to implement EPR systems once neighbouring state infrastructure can help enable the process. This signifies the potential for EPR requirements in the US to expand rapidly in the near future.

6. Referenced Legislation

- Alberta (Canada): Extended Producer Responsibility, Regulation 194/2022
- British Columbia (Canada): Recycling Regulation, 449/2004
- California (USA): Plastic Pollution Producer Responsibility Act, Senate Bill 54 Enacted, 2022
- Colorado (USA): Producer Responsibility Program for Statewide Recycling, House Bill 22-1355 Enacted, 2022



- Oregon (USA): Packaging Producer Responsibility for Recycling, Senate Bill 582 Enacted, 2021
- New Jersey (USA): Post Consumer Recycled Content Requirements, Senate Bill 2515 Enacted, 2021
- Maine (USA): Stewardship Program for Packaging, Legislative Document 1541, House Paper 1146 Enacted, 2021
- Maryland (USA): Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging, Senate Bill 222 Enacted, 2023
- Manitoba (Canada): Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship, Regulation 195/2008
- Manitoba (Canada): Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Guidelines, November 2008
- Manitoba (Canada): Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Rules, 2019
- New Brunswick (Canada): Designated Materials, Regulation 2008/54
- New Brunswick (Canada): Designated Materials, Regulation 2008/54 -Amendment - (on the establishment of an extended producer responsibility program for packaging and paper products) Regulation 2021/76
- Ontario (Canada): Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, Chapter 12, Statutes of Ontario 2016
- Washington (USA): Recycling, Waste, and Litter Reduction, Chapter 70A.245 RCW, Senate Bill 5022 Enacted, 2021
- Mexico: Prevention and Management of Waste, General Law, October 2003
- Mexico: Prevention and Management of Waste, General Law, October 2003 -Proposed Amendment - (on prohibiting unnecessary packaging) Draft Law, March 2022
- Mexico: Prevention and Management of Waste, General Law, October 2003 and Other - Proposed Amendment - (on prevention and management of plastic waste etc.) Draft Decree, May 2019
- Quebec (Canada): 2007 Schedule of Contributions for Containers and Packaging and Printed Matter, Rules, December 2008
- Quebec (Canada): 2010, 2011 and 2012 Schedule of Contributions for Containers and Packaging and Printed Matter, Rules, April 2012
- Quebec (Canada): 2014 Schedule of Contributions for Containers and Packaging and Printed Matter, Rules, June 2014
- Quebec (Canada): Compensation for Municipal Services for Recovery and Recycling of Residual Materials, Regulation, November 2004
- Quebec (Canada): Environment Quality Act, 1972
- Saskatchewan (Canada): Household Packaging and Paper Stewardship Program Regulations, 2023
- USA: Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), 42 USC 6901, 1976 Proposed Amendment – (on EPR, and reducing production and use of single-use plastic products and packaging) Senate Bill 3263, 2020

