

# EPR laws continue to spread

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[Product Stewardship Institute](#) CEO Scott Cassel believes when it comes to recycling packaging products there must be a balance between innovation and regulation.

"But the current system is inadequate, and the demand is greater than ever," Cassel told an audience at The Packaging Conference held Feb. 6-8 in Aria City Center, Las Vegas.

Nearly one-third of all municipal solid waste in the U.S. is packaging, which puts it at the forefront of the sustainability agenda for both the public and private sectors, according to the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI), a nonprofit organization based in Boston, MA.

Cassel said implementing a comprehensive extended producer responsibility (EPR) system in the United States would be a step in the right direction.

EPR policy holds producers responsible for the entire lifecycle of products and the packaging they produce. One aim of the policy is to reduce the amount of packaging, and to use environmentally preferable materials. Many of these laws are in place in Europe, and in parts of Canada.



Maine enacted the country's first EPR laws on electronics, thermostats, fluorescent lamps, and comprehensive framework. It also passed laws on automobile switches and batteries. In the U.S., there are now more than 70 EPR laws in 32 states on 10 products, according to PSI.

But Cassel feels the U.S. can do more.

"EPR is a game changer," he said. "We need to import some of the ideas from the EPR systems in Europe and Canada into the U.S."

For example, British Columbia enacted an EPR system where product producers are responsible for their post-consumer packaging waste, which must be recycled.

Cathy Cirko, VP of the [Canadian Plastics Industry Association](#), told **PlasticsToday** with the EPR system in place, it became the right time for the plastics industry to help expand the list of plastic products and packaging that potentially could be collected in BC's recycling program in the future.

"From a plastics industry point of view we don't want to see packaging material in landfill," she said in a phone interview. "Our objective is to help put in a structure that is efficient and cost effective."

While BC already uses a curbside system, it didn't include the collection of polystyrene foam and PE film. Cirko said the industry saw an opportunity to add these materials to the curbside policy.

To help drive this initiative, CPIA helped implement a curbside collection pilot project in the city of Langley for plastic PE film and PS foam. This is a "first of its kind" in BC, she said.

Eight hundred homes in Langley will take part in the 12-week test program, and on regular garbage pick-up days, the participating households can put out bags of wrap and foam.

The collected materials will be shipped to a plant, where it will be reduced to pellet form and eventually sold to manufactures to use as recycled content.

Cirko said at the end of the pilot, they hope to find results that support an efficient way of collecting and recycling these materials.

"Our industry recognizes that it is a key element to recover efficient material," Cirko said. "At end of day, if you can recycle it and recover it that is better the way."