

## INTRODUCTION

The intent of this report, as requested by Pollution Probe, is to highlight and describe the roles of key individuals and organizations whose actions led to the creation of the Blue Box. Special emphasis is placed on the role of Pollution Probe and its staff and volunteers in the 1970s and early 1980s in developing the 3Rs hierarchy. While the members of Pollution Probe dedicated a lot of time and effort to ‘reusing’ and ‘reducing’ strategies (the first and second tiers of the 3Rs hierarchy), this report was commissioned to focus on early recycling activities. Once some of the funding for the Blue Box was taken over in 1986 by Ontario Multi-Material Recycling Incorporated, the responsibility for the programme shifted away from the individuals who helped develop the concept and into the hands of the Ontario government, municipalities, industry and the public.

Holding to the notion that an idea is developed from the sum of its parts, the Blue Box story unfolds as a tale involving a few dedicated visionaries, money, hard work and a receptive public. The report identifies those “unsung heroes” who committed themselves and their lifestyles not only to the issue of recycling, but also to identifying the much larger issues of limited resources and environmental concerns that affect us all. With 3.8 million households currently having recycling opportunities across the province of Ontario, bringing the Blue Box to the general public has done more than divert material from the waste stream. It has helped raise environmental awareness and instigate changes in behaviour and consumer habits.

## HISTORY OF RECYCLING

It is important to the Blue Box story to understand recycling, its history and the order in which successive recycling efforts occurred. The concept of recycling (diverting valuable material

from the waste stream, and hence, away from landfill or even incineration, to be used again) is not a new idea. There were many recycling activities at the turn of the century, such as swine feeding, sorting and scavenging. These activities were organized by municipalities, contractors and the general public, who recognized the value of separating materials for re-use. During the depression and world wars, the development of source separation programmes and recycling technologies became necessary when materials were scarce. However, commitment and interest in long-term municipal recycling programmes were cyclical, being driven by economic considerations, wars, regulations and related changes in human behaviour.

It was in the 1950s and 1960s, with major changes in the quantity and nature of the waste stream, especially the increased use of disposable packaging and plastics, that technological changes were required for collection and disposal. The increasingly complex waste composition made source separation much more difficult, with the introduction of laminated packaging, non-soluble glues and bi-metallic cans. Often, waste collection companies stopped their resource recovery operations, disposing of all waste to landfills or incinerators.

Environmental groups, such as Pollution Probe, recognized the negative environmental impacts of the ‘explosion’ of waste generation, and were able to capture public attention and force recycling back onto the waste disposal agenda in the 1970s. The issues of diminishing landfill capacities, contaminated ground and surface waters, exceedances of emission standards from incinerators, and the related risks to human health, fed the fires of public concern and led to a rise in community recycling projects. It is during this period, in which there were overlapping interests among environmental groups, industry and governments, that the development of the Blue Box took form. A chronology of events relating to the Blue Box

programme is provided at the end of this report, beginning in 1969. The chronology allows the reader to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the eventual development by 1986 of the multi-material curbside recycling programme that continues to this day.

## THE 1970s

### Pollution Probe

Prior to 1970, there were almost no groups organized to address environmental issues. There was no Environment Canada, no Ontario Ministry of the Environment, no Greenpeace and no Corporations in Support of Recycling (CSR). One of the earliest environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) was created in 1969 by students and academics at the University of Toronto. Twelve founding members created Pollution Probe and, along with many volunteers, worked to identify and eliminate the stresses placed on the natural environment. In the words of Dr. Donald Chant, one of the founding members, "Pollution Probe has provided one of the few arenas at the University of Toronto where staff and students can positively and effectively join together, wholeheartedly and without conflict or suspicion, to correct some of the problems affecting modern man". It is evident from Pollution Probe's early activities, many of which are outlined in newsletters, that this group was extremely active in identifying key environmental issues, educating the public and challenging governments at all levels.

When Pollution Probe was formed, litter was a major environmental issue for the province of Ontario. Pollution Probe saw this as the tip of the iceberg and recognized that deep rooted environmental problems were based more on consumption habits, increased consumer packaging and the public's perception of unlimited resources. Therefore, the whole garbage issue, including waste disposal, became the basis of Pollution Probe's agenda. For

example, in 1969, an active Prober and founder, Paul Tomlinson, spent most of his time investigating the seven incinerators operating in Metro Toronto. He found that all of them were in violation of Provincial air pollution regulations, and that 43 per cent of the garbage was being disposed of through incineration. Paul and other members of Pollution Probe campaigned against the operation of these incinerators and succeeded in having them closed down. The next problem to face, however, was the large amount of garbage generated and its disposal to landfills.

In 1971, Pollution Probe published a book titled, "Recycling Project", which identified the problems of resource use and waste handling. The report not only stressed the need for recycling, but also offered various ways to implement such programmes through household sorting, collection systems, tax reforms and the like. But Probe didn't just write about recycling. In 1973, Pollution Probe formed the Garbage Coalition. Ultimately representing more than 60 groups concerned about garbage issues across Ontario, this group united to seek action from the Provincial Government in the development of a comprehensive plan to reduce and recycle solid waste.

In addition to promoting recycling efforts, Pollution Probe supported the use of refillable soft drink containers and fought to ban 'one way' or non-refillable pop cans. Members of Probe organized a caravan, approached soft drink and packaging industries, and organized a letter writing campaign to the government, stressing the need for stricter criteria for packaging and product design. None of these efforts, however, helped stop the growing use of the non-refillable pop can.

In June 1976, the Environmental Protection Amendment Act was passed. As an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), it introduced a five-year phase out of non-refillable beverage containers, beginning in July 1977. By

1978, however, the phase-out schedule had not been introduced by the Minister of the Environment, The Honourable George Kerr. In response, Linda Pim of Pollution Probe filed, in the Ontario Supreme Court, an Originating Notice of Motion requesting the Court to issue a Declaration that the Ministry of the Environment had failed to comply with provisions under the EPA. Although the court ruled that Linda Pim's complaint was not valid, the act of suing the Ontario government attracted the attention of government officials and the media, putting Pollution Probe and the government in the public spotlight.

Interaction with the government was critical for Pollution Probe, who tried to keep lines of communication open, especially with the Government of Ontario. Premier William Davis

met with members of Pollution Probe over dinner every few months to talk about current issues. Pollution Probe also conversed with Ontario's Environment Minister, The Honourable James Auld, to inform and try to influence the government to address the problems of waste generation and disposal.

Pollution Probe generated extensive media coverage to support its cause, with ready access to radio, television, newsletters and pamphlets. Full page advertisements were placed in the *Toronto Telegram* to promote environmental concerns, which allowed Pollution Probe to gain a high public profile for its advocacy positions. Through careful documentation and professional reports, Pollution Probe also gained credibility with governments and industry.

### **Pollution Probe's Travelling Caravans**

In 1971, Tony Barrett, one of the founders of Pollution Probe, used a tractor trailer donated from Carling Breweries, with driver 'Orval' at the wheel, and began a recycling caravan that started out in Windsor and ended on the steps of Parliament Hill in Ottawa. The caravan stopped in 25 communities to pick up baled recycling material and deliver this to the government. The proceeds of \$2,500 from the sale of the collected material were contributed to the government's 'pot' for recycling programmes. The purpose of the caravan was to focus on federal government responsibilities in waste management and to give wide public exposure to the word 'recycling'. The caravan was successful in both areas.

In 1973, the Garbage Team, later called the 3Rs Team, led by Peter Love, educated the public with the use of another travelling caravan; this time, a mobile office and meeting room. Visiting 140 communities across Ontario, the caravan brought Probers, mostly volunteers, to the public to talk about the garbage issue, and to provide information and tools for participation in the 3Rs (at the time — Refuse, Reuse and Recycle). The Garbage Team's efforts led to the formation of many local depots for recycling. Community involvement contributed greatly to education, awareness and action on recycling in Ontario.

In 1975, in a public pressure campaign to ban soft drink cans, Pollution Probe travelled around the community carrying a coffin. The public was asked to fill the coffin with nickels. Once full, Probe members carried it, as a symbol to 'bury' the pop can, to Premier William Davis' office at Queen's Park in Toronto.

The key for Pollution Probe and the Garbage Coalition was that they managed to unite a wide variety of people, groups and organizations to make an impact on decisions regarding garbage disposal. For example, Probe's credibility and actions stopped many of the proposed landfill sites in Harriston, Minto, Esquesing and Port Hope and helped many communities start recycling activities. Ultimately, Pollution Probe's goal was to bring about substantially more recycling efforts to help reduce the amount of solid waste generated. In this light, Probe undertook a comprehensive study, using a research team of economists, sociologists,

engineers and environmentalists, to examine ways to help overcome the barriers to recycling. Results of the study were laid out in a four volume report published in 1975, titled "Recycling: Identifying the Barriers", which stressed the importance of looking at the total solid waste system — the generation of waste, collection possibilities, reclamation technologies

## Is Five Foundation

The Is Five Foundation was created in 1974 by Jack McGinnis, an entrepreneur whose vision was to create an opportunity for people to work together and at the same time be given their own form of empowerment. A community-based charitable organization, Is Five worked on a variety of issues, including conservation, over-consumption, education and eventually recycling. Programmes based out of Is Five included educating students at schools, setting up a 'tent city' on the Allen Expressway to protest car pollution, banning pesticide use on mosquitos in North York, and setting up recycling efforts in Metro Toronto and surrounding areas.

Curbside newspaper collection systems were developed in the City of Toronto in the early 1970s, but it was not until 1974 that Is Five organized Canada's first multi-material curbside pick-up in the beaches area of East Toronto. "Project One Recycling", as it was called, was the first significant Is Five Foundation effort, which serviced 80,000 households. A single truck, driven by Jack, was used for weekly pick-ups of glass, cans and newspapers. Is Five members went from door-to-door and asked the community if they would like to participate in the programme, giving people an opportunity to get directly involved. Jack believed that active participation would lead to a more significant and identifiable change in behaviour, providing a new way of thinking about garbage.

### Another initiative by Pollution Probe: The "Great Garbage Gamble" by Tony Barrett

Having received the *White Owl Award* as Canada's environmentalist of the year in 1976, Tony Barrett gambled his \$3000 winnings in an innovative way. At the podium, while presenting the award to Tony, The Honourable George Kerr was challenged to a public wager. For every cabinet minister that Mr. Kerr was able to have follow the "seven household rules to recycling", Tony would contribute \$100 to the pot, and for every one that would not participate, Mr. Kerr would contribute \$100 to the pot, with all proceeds going to the Innis College Awards Programme for the most active environmental student. Tony's role was to inspect the various ministers' homes for participation and to encourage extensions to city councils to create multiple 'gambles'.

The Great Garbage Gamble received exceptional media coverage, because it was somewhat theatrical, and proved to be yet another effective tool to bring the issue of recycling to centre stage.

## **Resource Integration Systems and Camp Borden**

After *Project One Recycling* was up and running, Jack McGinnis hired Derek Stephenson as a research coordinator to assist in future developments. Together they learned a lot about recycling and people's behaviour, and used this knowledge to decide on what was needed to enhance their programme. Derek and Jack began with the idea of creating a consulting business to promote their ideas and programmes to a larger market. Resource Integration Systems (RIS) was incorporated in 1976, and it was in 1977 that RIS received its first large contract from Rick Findlay, Senior Project Engineer at the Environmental Protection Service of Environment Canada.

Rick, who joined Environment Canada to promote and develop recycling, came to Downsview, Ontario, to inspect the province's new Resource Recycling Facility, which operated by taking mixed waste, processing it and then trying to recover valuable material. He recognized that the process was flawed since it would be more efficient and productive to sort the garbage at source and use only the material that could be recycled. To promote source separation techniques, Rick, and others from Environment Canada, set up a community pilot project to test curbside collection of recyclable materials at Canadian Forces Base Borden, a military base outside of Barrie, Ontario. Environment Canada hired an engineering consulting firm to implement the programme. It soon became apparent, however, that the approach recommended was not appropriate, hence the contract was terminated and put up for tender in July 1977. One of the companies to bid for the contract was Boston, Gilbert, Henry, which would then subcontract the recycling initiative to Resource Integration Systems. Rick had heard of the work of RIS and its "organic" approach to recycling, and offered the contract to Boston, Gilbert, Henry. RIS submitted a

"Source Separation Programme Design", which outlined the following truck pick-up points and materials to be collected:

- **Private Married Quarters** for cans, newspaper and glass (provided with red dairy cases borrowed from the IGA, as well as paper bundlers)
- **Offices** for paper and newsprint
- **Messes** for food waste
- **Shopping Centres** for corrugated boxes
- **Clubs/Bars** for glass and bottles

The materials collected were delivered to local companies for reuse. The pilot project ran for one year with exceptional participation rates. Interest in the programme continued, and it was later taken over by local scrap metal companies which were able to benefit from the reuse of recycled materials.

## **Kitchener and Superior Sanitation (Laidlaw Waste Systems Ltd.)**

As a Pollution Probe volunteer with the Garbage Team, Eric Hellman was an active participant in the garbage issue during the 1970s. He moved from Toronto to finish his degree at the University of Waterloo, and continued to volunteer at the Kitchener/Waterloo office of Probe. Through courses he developed for university credit on waste management, and with the support of Pollution Probe, Eric organized *Garbage Fest 77* in Kitchener, Ontario — a festival to raise environmental awareness about the consequences of garbage generation. Eric asked Jack McGinnis to speak about the work at Is Five and RIS. He also approached Laidlaw Waste Systems Ltd., which at the time was called Superior Sanitation, to provide a speaker to talk about the company's recycling efforts. Ron Murray, the President of Laidlaw, agreed to send a representative from his company. Ron sent Nyle Ludolph. It was at *Garbage Fest 77* that Eric, Nyle and Jack met for the first time.

After *Garbage Fest 77*, Nyle was given the mandate by Ron Murray to increase Laidlaw's presence in recycling. Nyle became the manager of Total Recycling Systems, a subsidiary of Laidlaw Waste. His personal home activities gave Nyle the inspiration to move recycling to a larger scale. (At home, he separated all of his garbage, and by the end of the year, Nyle had put only six bags to curbside garbage, with a total weight of 102 pounds!)

### **Recycling Council of Ontario**

The Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO) was an important creation in the Blue Box story. As it grew in stature as an environmental and trade organization, RCO took over the role Pollution Probe's Garbage Coalition had provided in the early 1970s. One Saturday in 1978, at Trinity Church behind the Eaton Centre, Jack McGinnis and the Is Five Foundation called a meeting that was open to anyone interested in recycling. The RCO was created at this meeting. Eric Hellman, who had volunteered up to this time at Is Five, was made the first Executive Director. The RCO received a start-up grant from the Ministry of the Environment, and was housed within the Is Five Foundation until it established a financial base. Paul Taylor, following Eric as Executive Director, became a key player in the development of the organization, especially in the 1980s.

### **Ontario Ministry of the Environment — The 1970s and 1980s**

Early waste management policies of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) favoured mechanized recovery plants to deal with the large amounts of waste being generated. The \$20 million Resource Recovery Facility was proposed in 1974 and was operating by 1977. This plant was capital intensive, technologically complex and produced recovered materials of low-grade quality. Although waste was diverted from landfills, the process did not promote source separation or address the fundamental issue of the volume of waste generated.

At a time when interest and concern were high about the need to conserve resources and reduce waste, the MOE established the Solid Waste Task Force to assist the government. The Task Force recommended the need for a body to investigate and advise the Minister of the Environment on all aspects of waste management. As a result, the Waste Management Advisory Board was created in 1975, with strong support from the Honourable James Auld, Minister of the Environment. The Board, chaired by Bob Wolvett, "sought to foster and promote comprehensive government policies and programmes to conserve resources, reduce and recycle waste, and eliminate harmful waste effects".

The Board's Secretariat, which included Peter Crabtree, Giles Endicott and Wendy Cook, undertook research, carried out pilot projects, developed policies and made recommendations to the Minister on the need for materials processing facilities, the development of markets for recycled materials, the need for public consultation, and the development of various waste reduction programmes. One programme that was recommended by the Board was "Divide and Conquer". This programme, run by the Municipal Works Department of the MOE, was setup in Georgetown, the City of Toronto, Aurora and Etobicoke. It supported curbside pick-ups and provided depots for newspapers, cans and glass.

In addition, the Waste Management Advisory Board developed an approach for source separation and recommended its adoption to the Ontario government. In August 1980, at the annual meeting of the Association of Ontario Municipalities, the Honourable Harry Parrott, Minister of the Environment, announced the "Source Separation Programme", which encouraged the development of markets for recovered materials and provided funding to municipalities and organizations undertaking recycling programmes. The first recipient of funds from the Source Separation Programme

was a company called Halton's Recycled Resources Ltd in the Region of Halton. Operated by Gwen Discepolo, Halton's Recycled Resources Ltd received \$66,000 in 1981 to implement the first region-wide multi-material curbside recycling programme.

To promote a more comprehensive approach to waste management policies, practices and controls, the Ministry set out four principles that were presented to the Ontario Legislature in November 1982. To implement these principles, the MOE produced the "Blueprint for Waste Management in Ontario" in 1983. The Blueprint identified the need for the 4Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle and recover), and outlined the requirements and legislative framework that would be implemented to make it happen.

## THE 1980s

### **Resource Integration Systems and Laidlaw Waste Systems Ltd. in Kitchener**

In 1981, Eric Hellman, on behalf of RIS, and Nyle Ludolph of Laidlaw, presented a proposal to Ron Murray for Laidlaw Waste Systems Ltd. (Superior Sanitation) to collect multi-materials from the curb in a pilot project in Kitchener. Laidlaw would finance a budget for \$72,000, RIS would design the programme, and Total Recycling Systems would run it. Ron, who acknowledged the potential in recycling, was easily convinced that the project was desirable from both an economic and an environmental perspective. He accepted the proposal and the Kitchener Blue Box Pilot Project was under way by September 1981.

Prior to starting the Pilot Project, RIS began a heavy educational blitz to inform households about the programme. RIS members went from door-to-door, provided two newsletters promoting the need for recycling, and started the slogan "You can make a difference", which later became a major theme for the Blue Box

programme when it went city-wide. Once the Pilot Project was up and running, RIS sent participating households a monthly newsletter for the first six months.

The Kitchener Project included 1,000 households and was tested with four different approaches to recycling:

- Curbside pick-up without providing boxes to residents
- Curbside pick-up with boxes to residents
- Curbside pick-up with boxes, including knocking on doors to inform residents
- Composting with composters provided by Laidlaw, free of charge

RIS originally used blue boxes made from Chloroplast (corrugated plastic) that were shipped flat from Montreal, assembled by Nyle Ludolph and volunteers, and distributed to residents. RIS brainstormed for a couple of days to come up with a logo. "WE RECYCLE" was chosen and applied to every box that went out in Kitchener.

Various reasons have been suggested for why the colour blue was chosen for the Blue Box, for example:

- It was the best colour for protection against ultraviolet light degradation
- It was easy to identify at the curb
- The colour was readily available from the distributor
- Blue was the most attractive colour from RIS's point of view

Actually, blue is not the best colour for protection against UV rays. Black and grey are more durable colours; however, RIS had decided that blue looked the best. (RIS originally wanted the colour green, but it was not easy to identify at the curb and was not a durable colour).

RIS concluded, after close monitoring and evaluation for one year, that the system which

used curbside pick-up with boxes provided to residents was the most effective. This approach was adopted and the ‘test project’ continued to run. Laidlaw found that people in homes that did not receive boxes were requesting them, and letters came in every day asking for the continuation of the programme.

The programme eventually went city-wide in 1983, with Laidlaw providing one-half million dollars in funds. This was a risky investment as Laidlaw’s five-year contract with the city of Kitchener was scheduled to end the following year.

Financing was provided in the following way:

- \$250,000 for “blue” boxes provided to all residents
- \$150,000 for trucks
- \$100,000 for the baler, which was required as part of the contract that Laidlaw made with Ontario Paper

It was no surprise to RIS or Laidlaw that, almost immediately, an 85 per cent participation rate was achieved. This solidified RIS’s view that, given the tools and the opportunity, the public would act to do the “right” thing.

When the programme went city-wide, RIS and Laidlaw moved to provide more “professional” boxes to the 35,000 households in Kitchener. Since moulds were extremely expensive, Laidlaw chose an off-the-shelf container that “would not fit albums for university students to snag” and that was two cubic feet in size. RIS specified that the colour “must be blue”. Laidlaw purchased the boxes from Don Holliday, a sales representative for Buckhorn, for five dollars per box (an unheard amount at the time, as market prices ranged from \$9 to \$15). It is interesting to note that Don later left the company and started *AI Products*, which provided the first Blue Box specifically designed for recycling to the City of Mississauga in 1985.

In 1984, the Laidlaw garbage collection contract with the City of Kitchener was completed and a General Council Meeting was held for a tender call for a new contract. Attendance at the meeting was outstanding, including presenters such as Colin Isaacs, Executive Director of Pollution Probe, Paul Taylor of the RCO, Nyle Ludolph, members from the Chamber of Commerce and a group of children from Trillium Elementary School, all of whom were promoting the need for recycling. Emotions ran high. Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI), which did not have a recycling programme in place, underbid Laidlaw by approximately \$400,000. What ultimately swayed Council, however, was the performance of three grade four students from Trillium, who read a poem to everyone present about the need for recycling.

**The poem presented by Trillium Elementary School, which was captured on a home video, went like this:**

“Hello, we are here to encourage people to recycle their old bottles, cans and paper. Our class from Trillium school, grade four class have written a poem:

Girls and boys, women and men,  
Energy and resources can be used again, (2 lines missing due to the quality of the video)

The City of Kitchener has a really good thing going its way.

Let’s keep thinking of tomorrow instead of today in order

That we can make our world a good place to live in.

We need to keep recycling so vote for the Blue Bin.....”

At the end of the meeting, the contract was awarded to Laidlaw. The following day, Jack McGinnis received a phone call from Ron Murray, the President of Laidlaw, stating “I now know what recycling is worth — \$400,000”!

In 1985, Laidlaw won the bid for recycling in the City of Mississauga and introduced the second significant recycling programme in Ontario by June 1986, which at the time was the largest programme in North America.

### **Alcan and the “Refillable vs. Recyclable” Debate**

At the same time the recycling project was under way in Kitchener, another recycling issue was receiving attention in Metro Toronto. It is an issue that remains under active debate today — that of refillable versus recyclable soft drink containers. The debate began more than twenty years ago. In 1976, the steel industry had a powerful influence on the Ontario government, and successfully lobbied for soft drink container regulations in the Environmental Protection Act. The regulations clearly defined that a soft drink ‘can’ must be made of *steel*, thereby ensuring a stable market and keeping out plastics and aluminum in the soft drink industry. By promoting the value of recycling aluminum, and arguing for a level playing field in the soft drink container industry, two individuals from Alcan Canada Products Ltd., John Angus and Allan Wakefield, confronted the steel industry, the government and environmental groups.

Alcan approached RIS in 1982 with the Alcan Plan, which outlined the waste management and energy conservation advantages of aluminum cans for Ontario’s economy, consumers and the soft drink industry. Alcan’s objective was to alter the soft drink regulations to include aluminum cans, and to address, in part, Ontario’s waste stream problem by supporting a recycling programme province-wide. Together, RIS and Alcan developed the idea of a recycling effort, taken on by the aluminum, plastic and soft drink

industries, to provide funding for capital investment in a multi-material recycling programme.

In 1983, Alcan embarked on a programme to engage (but not necessarily be endorsed by) ENGOs in their plan, before it went to the government. A meeting with ENGOs was held in Alcan’s boardroom, which included representatives from Pollution Probe, Energy Probe and the Canadian Environmental Law Association. This ultimately proved to be a highly effective approach, which helped change the soft drink legislation and introduce the Blue Box province-wide.

From 1983 to 1985, Alcan and the plastics industry pressed the Ontario government to alter the soft drink regulations. When the newly elected Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Jim Bradley, came to office in 1985, calls were still coming in. Mark Rudolph, Executive Assistant for Jim Bradley, decided that the minister’s office would spend one whole day discussing the issue with the various stakeholders. In August 1985, the minister’s office met with five different groups: large pop brand name companies like Coke and Pepsi, small local bottlers, material suppliers, material fabricators and environmental groups. The outcome: a recycling system would be set up, paid for, in part, by industry; and aluminum and plastics would be allowed to enter into the soft drink container market.

New regulations were established under the Environmental Protection Act to promote recycling and to ensure that refillables for soft drink containers continued to be sold. Regulations 340 and 357 required that soft drink distributors and brand name owners must ensure that 40 per cent (today it is 30 per cent) of soft drinks were contained in refillable bottles. The remaining volume could be put in any container as long as it was recyclable, and as long as 50 per cent of the recyclable containers were being recycled by December 1988. To attain this goal,

a multi-material curbside recycling programme would have to be in place to make the programme economically feasible.

To monitor progress in meeting the regulations, Jim Bradley established the Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) in 1985. Members of RAC were tasked to monitor the use of refillables and recycling rates. Wendy Cook was appointed as Chair in 1987. Colin Isaacs of Pollution Probe and Paul Taylor of RCO were both members of the first RAC. In 1987, Paul was replaced by John Hanson, the subsequent Executive Director of the RCO.

### **Ontario Multi-Material Recycling Incorporated**

As in the 1970s, Pollution Probe again became a strategic player in the recycling effort in 1985. The establishment of the new regulations for refillables and recycled containers meant that a 100 per cent soft drink deposit system was not going to be in effect. Colin Isaacs, who had been actively involved in the refillables and recyclables issue, saw the possibility of an agreeable compromise in the development of a multi-material recycling programme. Colin met with John Angus and agreed to support the Alcan Plan. With support from Colin and, consequently, Pollution Probe, Alcan moved to provide research and funding for recycling feasibility studies and pushed for legislative reform that would allow aluminum and plastics into the soft drink industry. Colin's activities and involvement with government and industry over the soft drink containers, however, was viewed with suspicion among some NGOs. In addition, the decision to accept the idea of a city-wide recycling programme was not well received by other members of Pollution Probe, who were still committed to using refillables for soft drinks.

Nonetheless, the Ontario Multi-Material Recycling Incorporated (OMMRI) (now Corporations in Support of Recycling (CSR)), an

industry-funded organization, was formed in 1986 by the Ontario Soft Drink Association in response to the new soft drink container regulations and as a stipulation in RAC's Terms of Reference. Originally, OMMRI pledged \$1.5 million towards the development of a Blue Box system. By February 1987, that amount had been increased to \$20 million in capital for a four year period. This amount was matched by the provincial government and the municipalities, which provided sufficient funds to allow most of the municipalities across the province to implement the Blue Box programme.

To assist the province in setting up community recycling efforts, Laidlaw "lent" Nyle Ludolph to OMMRI for a two year period. Nyle travelled from city to city, and town to town and soon became known as the "Father of the Blue Box".

### **Insight for the Success of the Blue Box**

The establishment of OMMRI allowed the Blue Box programme to quickly spread across the province. Today, there are fleets of recycling trucks, recycling facilities, demands for recycled products and a public participation rate in recycling of 85 per cent. The success of the programme can be attributed to a number of factors: participation, dedication, hardware and money. Initial participation levels were exceptionally high as there was a strong desire by people to do something to improve the environment. People could actually see a row of blue boxes lined up along the street, which reinforced participation in the programme. Providing the "hardware" was thus a major selling point.

The Blue Box and its logo "We Recycle" provided the appropriate advertising to foster a long term commitment to recycling. A dedicated constituency was created, and because people were able to exert personal empowerment and make a difference, behaviour was altered on a large scale. With the funding provided from OMMRI and the Ontario government, the public

constituency expanded, making the Ontario Blue Box the most comprehensive curbside recycling system in the world — a system that has been copied in the United States and Europe. In 1987, the Recycling Council of Ontario received a United Nations Award for “distinguished environmental leadership and support of the innovative Blue Box Programme for recovery and recycling of household wastes”. The Ontario Blue Box system of boxes, bags, styles of promotion and level of participation still far exceeds curbside recycling attempts by other provinces across Canada.

## **CONCLUSION**

This report has identified a few key people who committed a large part of their lives to promoting the concept of recycling. The dedication of people like Rick Findlay, Wendy Cook, the members of RIS and Nyle Ludolph inspired the system of curbside pick-up of

recyclables. Laidlaw played a critical role in providing these visionaries with the funds, the equipment and the support for the initial programmes. The members of Pollution Probe provided leadership in bringing the notion of resource conservation and recycling to the public, governments and industry. Probe was able to attract media attention, gain government support and educate the public on the issue of garbage in the early 1970s. Colin Isaacs, in particular, was a major force in helping the Blue Box programme go province-wide when he endorsed the Alcan Plan in 1985, allowing industry and the government to pay for and expand the programme.

In the final analysis, the Blue Box has played a critical role by engaging people directly in protecting environmental quality. It is a daily reminder of the need to conserve resources and to consider the importance of personal consumption patterns in the urgent need to protect our fragile planet.

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1969	Pollution Probe founded by 12 individuals at the campus of the University of Toronto
1970	Federal Department of the Environment created  Toronto Recycling Action Committee (TRAC) created (Jack McGinnis, JoAnne Opperman members)
1971	Introduction of the Ontario Environmental Protection Act (EPA)  Pollution Probe's Recycling Caravan goes to Ottawa
1972	Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) created
1973	Formation of the Garbage Coalition  Probe Caravan visits more than 140 communities across Ontario  Members of Pollution Probe on TRAC prompt weekly paper pick-up
1974	Is Five Foundation created by Jack McGinnis  "Project One Recycling" - first multi-material curbside recycling effort, servicing 80,000 people in East Toronto - organized by Is Five
1975	Four Volume report "Recycling: Identifying the Barriers. A Municipal Solid Waste Study", Middleton & Associates, published by Pollution Probe  TRAC receives commitment to install 10 new recycling depots in Metro Toronto
1976	Waste Management Advisory Board formed  Introduction of regulations to the EPA restricting containers to four sizes of refillable glass & one size non-refillable can (made from steel, i.e.; prohibiting the entry of aluminum and plastics into the industry)  Environmental Protection Amendment Act was introduced in June
1977	Garbage Fest 1977 - held by Pollution Probe's Garbage Coalition in Kitchener/Waterloo  Resource Integration Systems (RIS) created - partners Jack McGinnis, Derek Stephenson  Camp Borden Recycling Pilot Project - Environment Canada hires RIS to design and implement programme  Resource Recovery Facility built and operated by MOE in Downsview
1978	Recycling Council of Ontario created by Jack McGinnis and colleagues. Executive Director - Eric Hellman  East York recycling programme starts (similar to the programme running in East Toronto)

1980	MOE introduces proposal for “Source Separation Programme”
1981	<p>Eric Hellman and Nyle Ludolph make a proposal to Superior Sanitation for a recycling project in Kitchener</p> <p>Superior Sanitation (Laidlaw) provides \$72,000 for Recycling Project, which gets under way in September</p> <p>Inception of the MOE’s “Source Separation Programme”</p>
1982	Alcan approaches RIS with the “Alcan Plan” on recycling
1983	Recycling efforts go city-wide in Kitchener - recycling for 35,000 households
1984	Laidlaw wins the contract in Kitchener because of recycling efforts
1985	<p>Laidlaw wins the contract in Mississauga - becomes the largest recycling effort in North America</p> <p>Series of meetings with ENGOs, industry and government regarding the issue of refillable versus recyclable soft drink containers. This led to the creation of regulations 340 and 357, which allowed aluminum and plastics into the market, provided a recycling system was set up</p> <p>Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) is established to monitor progress in meeting regulations. Wendy Cook Chairs and Colin Isaacs, Executive Director for Pollution Probe, sits on the board</p>
1986	<p>Creation of OMMRI</p> <p>Blue Box programme goes province-wide</p>

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## **Personal Communication**

Derek Stephenson — April 4 and 18, 1997

Jack McGinnis — April 7, 1997

Paul Taylor — April 8, 1997

Rick Findlay — April 8 and 10, 1997

Nyle Ludolph — April 9, 1997

Don Holliday — April 10, 1997

Colin Isaacs — April 14, 1997

Adam Cuilini — April 14, 1997

Peter Love — April 15, 1997

Geoff Love — April 15, 1997

Joe Warwick — April 16, 1997

Eric Hellman — April 16, 1997

Mark Rudolph — April 18, 1997

Wendy Cook — April 18, 1997

Tony Barrett — April 21, 1997

John Angus — April 21, 1997

Gwen Discepolo (Phinney) — May 28, 1997

John Hanson — May 28, 1997