

EPR in British Columbia

British Columbia is 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.