



RECYCLEBC™

CASE STUDY: KEURIG

Objective

Recycle BC and Keurig Green Mountain (Keurig) collaborated, along with other industry leaders, to help explore the potential to recover more small format plastics.

Background

Recycle BC and Keurig started working together in the fall of 2016. Keurig has an aggressive goal of converting all their K-Cup® pods in Canada to a recyclable format by the end of 2018 – two years ahead of their North American goal of 2020. We were happy to support this goal and help them achieve that.

What we did

Recycle BC worked with Keurig and our post-collection partners, Emterra Environmental and Merlin Plastics, to facilitate testing in the sorting and recycling facilities. Keurig has a sophisticated testing process where RFID (radio-frequency identification) technology is used to track where their K-Cup® pods end up in the material sorting line. A series of tests were conducted to answer the following:

- Can small format polypropylene plastics make it to the container line?
- Will optical sorting technology capture small format polypropylene plastic items?



Results

Small format polypropylene plastics has a stronger recovery potential and economic value proposition in BC than previously believed. Tests showed:

- An average of 92% of empty polypropylene Keurig K-Cup® pods made it to the container lines at Emterra and Merlin.
- Optical sorters at Merlin were able to capture an average of 91% of incoming polypropylene pods, Keurig's highest capture rate documented to date. These results are comparable to capture rates of the PET soda bottle – a widely recycled item.
- Minimal loss to glass, paper, and residue; record low percentage of pods going to the residual stream at a maximum of 6%.

Why it matters

Recycle BC works with partners like Keurig to help ensure the greatest amount of packaging is recycled and kept out of landfills. In addition to supporting businesses to make their packaging more recyclable, projects like this also help us ensure we can respond to the constant evolution of packaging types so we can continue to evolve and innovate to capture and recycle the greatest amount of materials possible.

K-Cup® pods can be recycled and recovered and are officially accepted in Recycle BC's program all across BC. Remove the lid and coffee grounds before placing in your recycling bin. The filter can remain.

Learn More

Learn more about our partnership by [viewing how we worked together](#), or read the article in the [Globe and Mail](#).