

Stakeholder Consultation: Problematic Materials

Phase 3: Survey Findings & Path Forward



Summary

This report presents the data and qualitative feedback gathered during Phase 2: Survey of BCMB's Stakeholder Consultation on exploring the phase-out of crystal and ceramic beverage containers for sale and return (to depots) in Alberta.

The key findings reveal a contrast. A substantial majority (**62%**) consider these materials "Not Important" to their current revenue.

However, a portion of respondents (**40%**) actively oppose the phase-out, while **44%** are neutral or unsure of the concept. This indicates that while the materials are not vital to daily operations, direct regulatory interference may be opposed.

This rest of this report outlines the Phase 2 survey's consolidated findings.



Context & Approach to Consultation

Phase 1 Information	Phase 2 Stakeholder Feedback	Phase 3 Findings and Broader Information Sharing
July 2025	August/September 2025	Present - October 2025
This document provided initial information and the comprehensive rationale for exploring the potential phase-out of two container types. The document established a foundational understanding for stakeholders.	Following the informational phase, a dedicated online survey was launched. This survey offered all manufacturers, registrants, and other interested stakeholders a formal opportunity to provide specific feedback, data, and sentiment regarding the potential phase-out of crystal and ceramic. This phase was designed for detailed perspectives and input.	Upon the completion and analysis of the Phase 2 survey, BCMB is presenting findings derived from the consultation process, providing a more detailed overview of the changes being explored and offering an interactive forum for broader discussion and clarification. This stage helps inform the direction of this overall initiative.

Survey Data

Stakeholder Demographics

Question 1: Company/Organization Name

Individual respondent names and company information will not be publicly disclosed in this report or subsequent BCMB documentation.

Question 2: What best describes your primary role in the Alberta beverage container system?

Role	Percentage of Respondents
Distributor/Wholesaler	56%
Manufacturer/Producer	33%
Other	6%
Retailer	5%

Market Presence

Question 3: Approximately what percentage of your total beverage container volume sold in Alberta is currently in crystal and/or ceramic containers?

Volume Percentage	Percentage of Respondents
Not Applicable	62%
Less than 1%	16%
6-10%	14%
1-5%	8%

Question 4: How important are crystal and/or ceramic containers to your company's current revenue or product offering in Alberta? (Select one)

Importance	Percentage of Respondents
Not Important	62%
Critically Important	14%
Very Important	13%
Moderately Important	5%
Other	4%
Slightly Important	2%

Phase-Out Sentiment

Question 5: What is the primary reason you use crystal and/or ceramic beverage containers?

Key Categories (based on qualitative survey data)

Not Used / Not Applicable

Most respondents indicated they do not currently use crystal or ceramic beverage containers.

Cultural & Traditional Significance

Common in Baijiu, Tequila, Mezcal, and Georgian wines — valued for heritage, authenticity, and craftsmanship.

Premium / Luxury Positioning

Used to elevate brand image, signal exclusivity, and appeal to collectors or high-end markets.

Manufacturer or Market Driven

Decisions based on supplier preferences, differentiation strategies, or brand innovation.

Environmental & Sustainability Factors

Seen as natural, reusable, and environmentally friendly — “taking from the earth and returning to it.”

Question 6: Given the challenges with recycling crystal and ceramic containers (as outlined in the Phase 1 document, including lack of widely verified recycling methods), do you believe BCMB should consider phasing out these two material streams?

Percentage of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Neutral/Unsure	44%
No, BCMB should not consider phasing them out.	40%
Yes, BCMB should consider phasing them out.	16%

Question 7: Please explain your answer to the previous question (Q5). What are the key reasons for your perspective, and what potential impacts (challenges or opportunities) would a phase-out have on your business and Alberta’s beverage sector more broadly?

Key Categories (based on qualitative survey data)

Not Used / Not Applicable

Most respondents indicated they do not currently use crystal or ceramic beverage containers.

- “Not applicable.”
- “We don’t use crystal or ceramic containers.”
- “This change wouldn’t affect our business.”

Cultural & Traditional Significance

Common in certain alcohol varieties (listed above).

- “Ceramic packaging is an important artistic and cultural expression in Chinese Baijiu.”
- “Tequila and Mezcal bottles are handmade by artisans — part of our culture.”
- “If banned, it would erase heritage from the shelves.”

Economic & Business Impact

Several participants raised concerns about significant financial losses or even the potential closure of businesses that rely heavily on imported products packaged in ceramic or crystal. Others noted broader economic implications for Alberta’s import, retail, and hospitality sectors.

- “We would go out of business — most of our revenue is from these imports.”
- “Our sales would drop by six figures.”
- “This would hurt local distributors and limit product diversity.”

Premium / Luxury Positioning

Crystal and ceramic were described as symbols of craftsmanship and prestige, helping brands differentiate in the premium and collector markets. Respondents worried that a phase-out would undermine Alberta's premium beverage offerings and reduce consumer choice.

"Ceramic bottles are collector's items — they're not waste."

"Crystal decanters elevate our brand and appeal to connoisseurs."

"Eliminating these materials limits innovation and premium appeal."

Environmental & Sustainability Views

Feedback on environmental impacts was divided:

- Some respondents supported the idea, viewing a phase-out as a responsible environmental step.
- Others disagreed, arguing that ceramics are durable, reusable, and already recyclable in other applications such as construction.

"Protecting the environment outweighs profit."

"Ceramic is recyclable and environmentally harmless."

"We should focus on education, not elimination."

Regulatory Frustration

A number of comments reflected discontent with government intervention and perceived regulatory overreach. Respondents felt the focus should be on collaboration and recycling innovation rather than banning materials outright.

"Too much overreach — find a way to make it work."

"This is unnecessary government involvement."

"The system should adapt, not eliminate."

Market Access & Competitiveness

Many respondents warned that a phase-out could disadvantage Alberta businesses by restricting access to premium products still available in other provinces, potentially driving consumers elsewhere.

"People will just buy from other provinces."

"Alberta will lose competitiveness and product diversity."

"This policy would only hurt local businesses."

Alternatives and Verified Recycling Methods

Survey responses indicate that industry awareness of verified recycling methods or robust end markets for crystal and ceramic beverage containers is extremely limited. The majority of participants reported no knowledge of existing recycling solutions—either in Alberta or elsewhere—reflecting the absence of accessible or established systems for these materials.

A small number of respondents noted that ceramic is recycled in other contexts, such as construction or industrial applications, or cited examples of greater container recycling fees and/or beverage deposits at the point of purchase in British Columbia.

Most respondents emphasized that crystal and ceramic bottles are rarely discarded, instead being kept as decorative or collectible items, reducing the likelihood of their appearance in Alberta's recycling stream. This

reinforces both the limited practical need and the lack of verified recycling pathways currently available for these materials.

Question 8: Is your company currently exploring or utilizing alternative packaging materials for products that are now in crystal and/or ceramic containers? If so, what are the primary considerations or barriers to transitioning?

Key Categories (based on qualitative survey data)

Not Applicable / Do Not Use These Materials

A significant portion of respondents clarified that their companies do not use crystal or ceramic packaging, and therefore are not exploring alternatives.

"Not applicable — we don't use these materials."

"This question doesn't apply."

No Viable Alternatives

The most common theme among users of crystal or ceramic was that no realistic alternative materials exist that can maintain the quality, function, or brand integrity of their products.

"The characteristics and functions of ceramic bottles cannot be replaced by glass or other materials."

"Producers will not change their packaging — it's part of their brand."

"No alternatives exist for these collectible decanters."

Culture & Tradition

Many respondents emphasized that ceramic packaging is integral to cultural heritage, particularly for Chinese spirits and Mexican Tequila/Mezcal. Transitioning to other materials was viewed as disrespectful to tradition and unrealistic.

"Ceramic containers are part of our drinking culture."

"This production process has been passed down for generations."

"Hand-painted bottles are artistic expressions — they can't just be replaced."

Economic Barriers

For some, the idea of switching was technically possible but financially or logistically infeasible. They cited high costs, minimum order quantities, and limited access to R&D funding as major obstacles.

"We're too small to fund that kind of R&D."

"The minimum order for glass alternatives is unreachable."

"Cost of transition would outweigh any potential benefit."

Functionality & Product Preservation

A subset of responses noted that ceramic has functional advantages, particularly for products that require protection from sunlight or continued fermentation — properties that can't be easily replicated by glass.

"Chinese liquor needs to avoid sunlight; ceramic is essential."

"Ceramic helps preserve the flavour and fermenting qualities."

Alternatives, Support & Collaboration

Only a few respondents expressed active exploration of alternative materials, generally in premium glass formats rather than true substitutes for ceramic or crystal. These were framed as aesthetic choices rather than environmental shifts. And, a minority of participants suggested that regulators, large producers, and government bodies should help fund or facilitate the transition, rather than placing the burden solely on smaller importers and distributors.

“Unsure if they will be banned, so exploring some changes.”

“We’re looking at fancy glass bottles.”

“We expect regulator support and federal subsidies to make it happen.”

“Larger brand owners should help fund sustainable packaging solutions.”

Question 9: Are you aware of any verified recycling methods or robust end markets for crystal and/or ceramic beverage containers that are currently available in Alberta or elsewhere, which BCMB should investigate further?

The sentiment of this question is captured in the summary for this section, “Alternatives and Verified Recycling Methods”

Question 10: Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the potential phase-out of crystal and ceramic containers from Alberta?

See Question 9 summary.

Question 11: If you would like to be contacted directly by BCMB to discuss this initiative further, please provide your email below.

Individual respondent names and company information will not be publicly disclosed in this report or subsequent BCMB documentation.

BCMB’s Path Forward

Based on feedback received through the Phase 2 crystal and ceramic beverage container consultation survey, BCMB will continue to take a collaborative, research-informed approach while exploring the potential phase-out of these two material types. BCMB’s path forward includes:

Continued Stakeholder Consultation

- Engage directly with stakeholders who requested follow-up discussions to ensure their perspectives and technical insights are accurately captured.
 - Facilitate targeted meetings with key importers, distributors, and manufacturers to better understand product volumes, supply chain implications, and cultural considerations tied to these materials.
- Maintain open dialogue with the Alberta Bottle Depot Association (ABDA), Alberta’s Collection System Agent (Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation (ABCRC)) and other industry partners such as Alberta, Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) to assess impacts.

Collaboration with BCMB's Board and/or the Government of Alberta

- Share consultation findings and stakeholder feedback with [BCMB's Board of Directors](#) and, if required, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas to align on regulatory direction and next steps.

Further Research & Technical Exploration

- Continue research into potential recycling and recovery methods for crystal and ceramic materials, building on preliminary findings identified by BCMB staff.
- Leverage the Recycling Verification Working Group (under BCMB's Registration and Recycling Committee) to evaluate potential methods and assess applicability within Alberta's beverage container recycling system
- Exploring contamination mitigation methods to reduce the risk of crystal and ceramic contamination within the glass material stream. This includes exploring regulatory options which may include (but are not limited to): enhanced labeling to aid depot sorting, applications of increased Container Recycling Fees (CRF) or deposit to incentivize careful handling, or potential material use limits tied to specific high retail price points.
- Network with other jurisdictions and recycling specialists to explore innovative or emerging solutions, including multi-industry collection or repurposing programs.

Should you have any immediate questions or require clarification on the information presented in this BCMB's Stakeholder Consultation regarding the potential phase-out of ceramic and crystal from Alberta's beverage container recycling system, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@bcmb.ab.ca.

About BCMB

Alberta's beverage registration and beverage container recycling system is managed and regulated by Beverage Container Management Board (BCMB). As the provincial beverage container regulator, BCMB is committed to maximizing resource recovery and efficiency to build Alberta's circular economy.