

# Print and Paper The Facts

## Paperless "Green" Claims - Key Facts to Consider

Many North American service providers are urging their customers to go paperless with claims that it will "save trees", it is "greener" or it will otherwise "protect the environment". These "go paperless" marketing messages often ignore the environmental impacts of switching to digital services and products, as well as the unique sustainable features of print on paper - it comes from a renewable resource; it is recyclable; it is recycled more than any other commodity in North America; and a large portion of the energy used to produce paper in North America comes from renewable biomass. Since 2008, Two Sides has led a campaign to challenge unsubstantiated environmental marketing claims used to promote electronic services, and encourage companies to follow best practices for environmental marketing. The initiative has been resoundingly successful, with over 335 leading companies removing their anti-paper claims. Outlined below are some key facts used in our campaign.

**Marketing claims like "go green, go paperless" and "go paperless, save trees" do not meet guidelines for environmental marketing established by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Competition Bureau of Canada.**

FTC Green Guides, Section 260.2 - Marketers must ensure that all reasonable interpretations of their claims are truthful, not misleading, and supported by a reasonable basis before they make the claims. In the context of environmental marketing claims, a reasonable basis requires competent and reliable scientific evidence. Such evidence consists of tests, analyses, research, or studies that have been conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by qualified persons and are generally accepted in the profession to yield accurate and reliable results. Such evidence should be sufficient in quality and quantity based on standards generally accepted in the relevant scientific fields, when considered in light of the entire body of relevant and reliable scientific evidence, to substantiate that each of the marketing claims is true.<sup>1</sup>

**Claims like "save trees" create a false impression that forests are a finite resource, being destroyed. In truth, forests are a renewable resource that is continuously replenished using sustainable forest management practices.**

In North America we grow many more trees than we harvest. Over the last six decades, the total U.S. forest area has increased by over 3% and the net volume of trees on timberland has increased by 58%.<sup>2</sup> Canada's forest cover and wooded area has remained fairly constant over the past two decades<sup>3</sup>. In 2012, 148 million m<sup>3</sup> of industrial roundwood were harvested (0.3% of Canada's standing wood volume). This is considerably less than the sustainable harvest level determined for Canada, 227 million m<sup>3</sup>/year.<sup>4</sup>

**Avoiding the use of wood is not the way to protect forests for the long term.**

While saving trees and protecting forests is a widely shared goal, avoiding the use of wood is not necessarily the way to get there. It is precisely the areas of the world that consume the least wood

that continue to experience the greatest forest loss. Continued use of paper and other wood products may be a key factor in maintaining a forested landscape for future generations. This realization is reflected in today's third-party forest certification systems that aim to offer a market-based system for supporting the sustainable growth, harvesting, and consumption of forest products.<sup>5</sup>

**The income landowners receive for trees grown on their land is an important incentive to maintain their land in forests.**

This is especially important in locales facing economic pressure to convert forestland to non-forest uses.<sup>6</sup> If the market for their wood products is lost, there is little incentive for owners to maintain their land in forest. Virtually all pulpwood (90%) harvested in the U.S. comes from private land.<sup>7</sup> Far from causing deforestation, the demand for sustainably sourced paper in the U.S. promotes responsibly managed forests, which provide many environmental and social benefits.



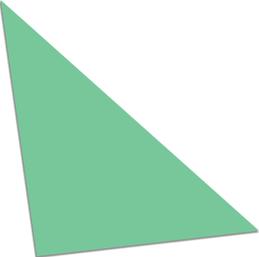
**In North America, the majority of wood fiber for papermaking comes from sawmill residues and recycled paper products.**

Only 36% of the annual U.S. timber harvest is used each year in manufacturing paper and paperboard, with the rest from sawmill

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residues and recycled paper products.<sup>8</sup> In Canada, 87% of the wood fiber used to make paper comes from sawmill residues (59%) and recycled paper (28%).<sup>9</sup> Paper is only one among many forest products from North American sustainably managed forests.<sup>10</sup>

**The full impacts of converting to e-media are often not properly considered and sometimes completely ignored.**

The direct impact of information and communication technology (ICT) products and services replacing paper is far from negligible, and the trade-off between the two “technologies” depends on conditions such as use frequency, source of energy, end-of-life management of the products, etc.<sup>11</sup> In the United States in 2009 (the most recent U.S. EPA figures available), 47.4 million computers were ready for end-of-life management. Some 29.4 million were disposed of and 18 million (38%) were collected for recycling.<sup>12</sup> This compares to a U.S. paper recovery rate of 66.8% in 2015.<sup>13</sup> In Canada, the recovery rate of waste paper and packaging was 73% in 2010-2012.<sup>14</sup>

**Unsubstantiated environmental marketing claims like “go paperless, go green” are damaging to the North American economy and threaten jobs.**

In fact, a total of 7.5 million jobs (6% of total U.S. jobs) that generate \$1.4 trillion in sales revenue (4.6% of U.S. Total Output) depend on the U.S. mailing industry, which includes paper production, printing production, related suppliers, graphic design and the handling and distribution of mail.<sup>15</sup> In Canada, there are over 800,000 mail-related jobs, almost 5% of all jobs in the country. Revenues from this sector are estimated at \$88 billion, or 5% of total GDP in Canada.<sup>16</sup>

**The misleading nature of “go paperless, go green” environmental claims is not lost on the consumer.**

Consumer surveys in the U.S.,<sup>17</sup> and UK<sup>18</sup> found that:

- 50% or more of respondents don’t believe, feel misled or question “go paperless, go green” claims.
- 83% agreed that e-billing and e-statements are being

promoted to save cost.

- 80% did not think it was appropriate for companies to cite environmentalism when it is not their real motive.
- Over 70% believe that print and paper is a sustainable way of communicating when produced and used responsibly.

**The majority of people prefer reading print on paper compared to screens and want to retain a paper option.**

Consumer surveys in the U.S.<sup>19,20</sup> found that:

- When given a choice, 81% of respondents indicated that they prefer to read print on paper. These percentages drop to 39% for screens, laptops and PCs, 30% for e-readers and 22% for mobiles or smartphones.
- 88% believe that they understand and can retain or use information better when they read print on paper. Reading on screen shows lower preference with the lowest being 41% indicating that mobiles and smartphones were useful for understanding and retaining information.
- 64% say they would not choose a company that did not offer a paper bill option.
- 91% say they are unwilling to pay for paper bills.
- 50% read their bills and statements received both electronically and by postal mail; only 15% read bills which they receive by email only.

**The term “paperless” is disingenuous because people often print e-documents at home or at the office for ease of reading, storage, archiving, security and reminders.**

Corporations that are eliminating paper-based options are passing printing costs to consumers and ignoring the social value of print on paper. A survey of U.S. consumers<sup>21</sup> found that 34% of respondents are ‘home printers’ with 20% printing up to 20% of their bills and 8% printing between 80% and 100% of their bills. Respondents said that printed documents are easier to read (74%), better for storage and archiving (56%), more secure (55%) and less likely to be lost (47%).

<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Federal Trade Commission, 2013](#)

<sup>2</sup> [USDA Forest Service, 2012](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Conference Board of Canada, 2013](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Natural Resources Canada, 2014](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Dovetail Partners, 2014](#)

<sup>6</sup> [World Business council for sustainable Development and NCASI, 2007](#)

<sup>7</sup> [USDA, 2014](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Dovetail Partners, 2014](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Forest Products Association of Canada, 2012](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Natural Resources Canada, 2014](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Arnfolk, P., 2010](#)

<sup>12</sup> [EPA, 2010](#)

<sup>13</sup> [American Forest & Paper Association, 2016](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Forest Products Association of Canada, 2014](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Envelope Manufacturers Association, 2015](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Envelope Manufacturers Association and Robustion Technologies Inc, 2014](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Two Sides and Toluna, 2013](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Two Sides and Toluna, 2013](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Two Sides and Toluna, 2013](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Two Sides and Toluna, 2015](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Two Sides and Toluna, 2015](#)

