



Ontario's Waste Management Challenge – Is Incineration an Option?

Quick Facts:

- In 2005 Ontario's municipalities and Industrial, Commercial & Institutional sector produced approximately 13.3 million tonnes of waste – 3.3 million tonnes were diverted through the province's 3Rs program, 6 million tonnes were landfilled or incinerated in Ontario and 4 million tonnes were exported to the United States for landfilling or incineration.
- In 2005 approximately 90% of the waste exported to the United States went into landfills in Michigan.
- In 1991 the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, then under the New Democratic Party, banned new incinerators for municipal solid waste. In 1995 a newly elected Progressive Conservative government, in fulfilling an election promise, quickly proposed a regulation to remove the ban on new incinerators for MSW in Ontario.
- While other facilities exist in Canada, only one incinerator currently processes municipal solid waste in Ontario. The Algonquin Power Energy From Waste Inc. facility is a waste to energy facility located in Brampton, Ontario that has been in operation since 1992.
- On March 23, 2007 the Ministry of the Environment finalized regulatory amendments that would exempt pilot and demonstration projects with a maximum capacity of 75 tonnes per day from the *Environmental Assessment Act*.
- In a recent fact sheet, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment reported that municipal waste diversion rates in the Greater Toronto Area in 2005 were 40% for Toronto, 37% for Peel, 31% for York and 36% for Durham.
- Nova Scotia has had a provincial strategy for managing solid waste since 1995. This strategy was based on a discussion paper and widespread consultation, and set a goal of achieving 50% waste reduction by 2000. Nova Scotia's curbside recycling and composting of organic waste was available to 76% of the population in 2002, resulting in a 46% diversion rate from disposal. The Lunenburg Regional Recycling and Composting System is diverting up to 75% of the trash.
- Recycling leads to lower energy consumption and environmental burdens than waste disposal.
- Although incineration is commonly used in Europe their waste management policy context is very different from that in Ontario. It is based on the notion of a waste hierarchy that prioritizes the options available for waste management in the following order: Prevent the waste in the first place → Re-use the product → Recycle or compost the material → Recover the energy (by incinerating) → Dispose of the product (in a landfill)
- A number of laws, regulations and policies regulate the incineration of hazardous and municipal solid waste in Ontario. No comprehensive waste management strategy, however, currently exists to lay out priorities and guide how the province manages its waste.