

# Waste Management Industry Survey: Business and government sectors, 2018

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## Waste diversion in Canada

Canadian households and businesses diverted almost 10 million tonnes of waste from landfills in 2018, up 5.8% from 2016.

The two most populous provinces, Ontario (3.3 million tonnes) and Quebec (2.8 million tonnes), diverted the most waste in 2018, while Quebec (+16%) and Saskatchewan (+15%) saw the greatest increases in waste diversion since 2016. In Quebec, this growth translated to about an extra 374 000 tonnes of discarded goods avoiding burial in a landfill.

### No aversion to diversion

Just over 350 000 tonnes of plastic were diverted from disposal in Canada in 2018. As the importance of reducing the amount of waste disposed of in the nation's landfills becomes a more important part of the national conversation, diversion efforts are being targeted at specific materials.

Plastic in particular has been the subject of new policies that aim to address the presence of plastics in our oceans (Ocean Plastics Charter) and to reduce plastics in our environment in general, through the federal Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste.

British Columbia recycled over 68 000 tonnes of plastic in 2018, in part through the Recycle BC program, up 3.5% over 2016. Recycle BC is a program coordinated by manufacturers and producers of packaging products and oversees the processing of much of the diverted municipal waste in the province.

Extended producer responsibility agreements incentivize producers to manufacture their goods with end-of-life management in mind. These types of arrangements helped to promote the diversion of just over 105 000 tonnes of electronic products from Canada's landfills, up almost 4 000 tonnes compared with 2016. Recycling of electronics has steadily increased since first measured by this survey, climbing 10-fold from around 10 000 tonnes recycled in 2004.

### Organic waste diversion

In 2018, 2.9 million tonnes of organic waste were diverted from landfills. Almost 2.3 million tonnes of this amount were from residential sources. Organic materials handled by the waste management industry include food, leaf and yard, and urban forest waste.

Municipalities across Canada have taken steps in recent years to reduce the amount of organic waste disposed of in landfills. In landfills, organic waste breaks down in a low- to no-oxygen environment that produces methane—a gas with about 20 times the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide.

Alberta saw a large increase in diverted organic waste in 2018, likely the result of recent expansion to organic waste processing capacity in the province. Over 80 000 more tonnes were processed and diverted than in 2016, reaching just over 320 000 tonnes.

### New for 2018: Materials, by source

In 2018—for the first time—the Waste Management Industry Survey captured source information for each type of diverted material reported in the survey.



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The new data revealed that almost three-fifths (2.0 million tonnes) of recycled paper products in Canada came from non-residential sources, while about three-quarters of diverted plastic products (250 000 tonnes) came from the residential sector.

Diversion of residential organic waste represented the larger slice of the organic diversion pie, accounting for 2.3 million tonnes, compared with almost 600 000 tonnes coming from non-residential sources.

Saskatchewan reported the highest rate of residential paper fibre recycling among the provinces, at almost 70%, or 38 000 tonnes of its total 57 000 tonnes of paper recycling. Residentially sourced plastics accounted for nearly four-fifths (just over 98 000 tonnes) of Ontario's total amount of recycled plastics.

**Note to readers**

*This release is based on the 2018 results of the biennial Waste Management Industry Survey of the business and government sectors.*

**Available tables:** [table 38-10-0138-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** [survey number 2009](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).