

Plastic

Canadians produce 3.3 million tonnes of plastic waste each year, with 2.8 million tonnes of it ending up in landfills. According to an Environmental Defence report, 90 per cent of seabirds in the world have plastic in their stomachs, 50 per cent of all cetaceans, a group of aquatic mammals which include whales, dolphins, and porpoises, have eaten plastics, and one third of the world's sea turtles have also consumed plastics.

The production of plastic contributes to climate change, the degradation of the material is toxic and now we are slowly beginning to understand the effects it has on the human body when ingested.

The Canadian government has announced its intention to move towards a circular economy and to recycle plastic goods as well as ban specific single-use plastics, but the average Canadian has no clue what our recycling industry even looks like. We have been told recycling is the golden ticket, but how are we supposed to understand the issue when we don't even know where our plastics came from, or where they are heading?



BOWMANVILLE, Ont. (24/11/2020) – Nestlé plastic water bottles are available by the case in [FreshCo](#) in Bowmanville, on Tuesday Nov. 24, 2020. These plastic water bottles take hundreds of years to decompose and are filled with water taken from all over Canada. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – Stacks of recycled material bales at Quinte Waste Solutions pour into the rear of the building in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. Although most items are loose in the piles of recycling, sometimes the facility gets bags of recycled materials. This forces workers to tear open the bags and sort through the material, which takes more time and effort out of their rushed day. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – Alana Bancroft, Customer Service Administrator at [Quinte Waste Solutions](#), looks down at the mountain of recycling material as a rat runs by at the recycling facility, in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. Bancroft says rats are everywhere in the recycling materials and scavenge anything they can find. This mountain of material is over 20 feet tall and is supplied by nine different municipalities in the area. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – Billy, a sorter at [Quinte Waste Solutions](#), uses a loader to dump clean HDPE (high-density polyethylene) plastics onto a conveyor belt in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. These plastics will go into a bale compactor that will press these plastics into specific bales that will be sold to companies that will reuse the material. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – Clean HDPE (high-density polyethylene) pours over the conveyor belt after Billy, a sorter at [Quinte Waste Solutions](#), had dumped the material on the belt with a loader at the recycling facility, in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. These plastics will travel up the belt into a compacter, which will create bales of plastics to be sold to companies and given a second life. These materials include tubs of orange juice, laundry detergent bottles, canola oil containers, and even bleach bottles. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – Sorting signs hang above their respective bins, at *Quinté Waste Solutions*, in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. PETE (polyethylene terephthalate) plastics and the tubs and lids plastics are just two of the categories workers sort materials into. These skilled workers have been trained to recognize different recyclable material in an instant and can sort through tons of materials a day. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – A stray pop can lays at the end of the sorting conveyor belt, at [Quinte Waste Solutions](#), in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. After all the plastics and other recyclables have been sorted out, these aluminum cans are the last materials to be sorted. The machine on the left of the photo uses an Eddy current, that zaps the cans up into the piping above, and transfers them into a bale compressor. Photo by Alex Bowman



TRENTON, Ont. (01/12/20) – Stacks of recycled material bales at [Quinte Waste Solutions](#), line the rear of the building in Trenton on Monday Nov. 30, 2020. Alana Bancroft, Customer Service Administrator at [Quinte Waste Solutions](#), says that all of the plastic bags hanging out of the bales must be taken out and resorted. Bancroft also explained that the facilities workers sort through 30 to 60 [tonnes](#) of recyclable materials a day at full capacity and are trained to quickly sort through different grades of plastics, aluminum and paper. Discussing Canada's nine per cent recycling rate, Bancroft explains that that figure encompasses all materials across the country, including agricultural, automotive and construction materials. Ontario's Blue Box program is actually much better at diverting waste in some municipalities, with [Quinte Waste Solutions](#) achieving a recycling rate of 89 per cent. Photo by Alex Bowman



TORONTO, Ont. (20/11/2020) – A used tampon applicator lays on the beach at the Leslie Street spit in Toronto, on Friday Nov. 20, 2020. According to the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, over three thousand applicators are found on Canadian beaches each year. With more environmentally friendly alternatives like menstrual cups, or reusable menstrual pads or even paper applicators available to consumers, there is no need to use these plastic applicators anymore. Photo by Alex Bowman



BOWMANVILLE, Ont. (28/10/2020) – Ducks swim through floating trash at Bowmanville Creek, in Bowmanville on Wednesday Oct. 28, 2020. In the fall, visitors can find piles and piles of trash heaped on the creek bank from fishermen who hunt for salmon and trout during this time of year. From cans of alcohol to coffee cups, the trash can be found throughout the entire creek. Photo by Alex Bowman



BOWMANVILLE, Ont. (28/10/2020) – An old face mask lays in a pile of fish bones at Bowmanville Creek, in Bowmanville on Wednesday Oct. 28, 2020. Photo by Alex Bowman



BOWMANVILLE, Ont. (28/10/2020) – A pile of trash sits along the waters edge at Bowmanville Creek, in Bowmanville on Wednesday Oct. 28, 2020. These plastic water bottles pictured here, will take hundreds of years to break down, and if properly disposed in the local blue bin, could have been recycled. Photo by Alex Bowman



TORONTO, Ont. (20/11/2020) – An old kids play pool sits crumpled, on the beach at the Leslie Street spit in Toronto, on Friday Nov. 20, 2020. Among plastic water bottles, plastic straws, used tampon applicators, and even old broken toilets, this beach was littered with all sorts of trash from the city and its surrounding watershed. Guests are left wondering how a plastic kiddie pool ever ended up on this beach. Photo by Alex Bowman