

## PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**TOPIC:** Canadian garbage and recycling illegally shipping to developing countries

### QUESTIONS:

- Who is your audience?
- What is the issue?
- What is the evidence?
- What should they do about it?

### RESEARCH:

1. Christy Somos, CTV News (May 28, 2019), "This is why Canadian waste keeps ending up in Asia": <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/this-is-why-canadian-waste-keeps-ending-up-in-asia-1.4441472>

- Contaminated waste from Philippines
- "the Malaysian government announced that 60 illegal containers filled with waste from other countries" (amount to 3 million kilograms of non-recyclable plastic waste)
- trash falsely labelled as imports
- Keith Brooks, programs director at Environmental Defence: "We only recycle nine per cent of our plastics."
- Canadian plastics processed in China (China banned practice in 2018, looking for other places to export waste)
- Jo-Anne St. Godard, executive director of the Recycling Council of Ontario: "Canada doesn't actually process much recycling domestically"
- Myra Hird, professor of Environmental Studies at Queens University: "waste changes hands through series of contacts (move out of city/place it came from), along way things get mislabelled/smuggled to illegal sites"
- Less efforts to send homogeneous materials (other materials get mixed in)

2. Margareth Sembiring, Rajaratnam School of International Studies (July 2019), "Global Waste Trade Chaos: Rising Environmentalism or Cost-Benefit Analysis?" <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep26804.pdf>

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- Global waste trade = multi-billion dollar industry (and a necessity due to amount of waste)
- Costs of recycling cheaper in developing countries
- The United Nations Commodity Trade Database "world's plastic waste export and import in 2017 was valued at USD 4.5 billion and USD 6.1 billion"
- May 2019, Philippines sent 69 containers of trash back to Canada (shipped from Canada between 2013 - 2014 as part of global waste recycling trade) - smuggling because non-recyclable materials mixed inside containers
- Philippines' ambassador returned home, President Duterte threatened to wage war against Canada and leave the garbage containers in Canadian waters: only after that the garbage was returned
- 2017: China no longer accepting waste (policy came into force in 2018) ~ 111 million metric tons of plastic waste need to find new dumping sites by 2030
- April 29 ~ May 10 2019: Basel Convention amend agreement by including plastic waste transfer in regulation
- "This significant move renders the import of certain types of plastic illegal, akin to the import of toxic waste"

3. Evan Dyer, CBC News (March 13, 2020), "Canada is asking for more time to enact a promised ban on shipping plastic waste": <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/plastic-waste-basel-convention-canada-1.5495920>

- "Canada's laws will not be in compliance with a treaty meant to stop rich countries from shipping their hazardous waste to poor countries"
- **Plastic Contamination**
- Gabrielle Lamontagne, Environment Canada: "Before Canada accept amendments ~ need to complete internal acceptance procedure led by Global Affairs Canada (hope to finish work before end of year) ~ come into force March 24, take effect January 1"
- Kathleen Ruff, Founder of RightOnCanada, "rest of world is moving forward, and Canada is dragging its feet, and worse, opposing it."
- "Canada is asking for a special delay in the deadline to align itself with a treaty it helped to craft 30 years ago"
- Amendments intended to stem flow of micro plastics into world's oceans
- Nationwide ban on single-use plastics "as early as 2021"
- Philippines banned shipping (waste continues to flow to Asia through loopholes)
- **Developing Countries banning/not accepting foreign waste**
- "If there was a critical analysis around our dependence on waste export, this horizon would have been seen"
- "The government has taken a very, very weak stance with regards to waste management and recycling companies. They've allowed these companies to control our waste management"
- **Canada relying on shipping waste instead of developing own solutions or reducing the amount of waste generated in first place**

4. Ryan Flanagan, CTV News (October 7, 2020), "What is and is not included in Canada's ban on single-use plastics": <https://www.ctvnews.ca/climate-and-environment/what-is-and-is-not-included-in-canada-s-ban-on-single-use-plastics-1.5136387>

- Covered: Checkout Bags, Stir sticks, Beverage six pack rings, Cutlery, Straws, Food packaging made from plastics that are difficult to recycle
- NOT Covered: Garbage bags, Milk bags, Snack food wrappers, Disposable personal care items and their packaging, Beverage containers and lids, Contact lenses and packaging, Cigarette filters, Items used in medical facilities, Personal protective equipment
- Reason for products not involved in ban: lack of affordable and reality available alternatives, lack of major impact on the environment without legitimate recycling options, items serving an essential purpose

5. Rachel Aiello, CTV News (October 7, 2020), "Canada banning plastic bags, straws, cutlery, and other single-use items by the end of 2021": <https://www.ctvnews.ca/climate-and-environment/canada-banning-plastic-bags-straws-cutlery-and-other-single-use-items-by-the-end-of-2021-1.5135968>

- achieve zero plastic waste by 2030
- **Finding ways to make sure more plastic is recycled**
- Finalized new regulations don't come into effect until end of 2021
- Ban does not impact access to PPE/other plastics used in medical facilities (find options to make some of PPE biodegradable)
- Polystyrene: difficult substance to recycle
- Sarah King, Greenpeace Canada, "the federal government has instead continued to largely rely on the recycling myth and the bare minimum ban list"
- **Hold big companies responsible for plastic production (spark investment in recycling)**
- 50 percent recycled content in plastic products by 2030

6. Recycling Council of Ontario, (April 22, 2019), “Canada recycles just 9 percent of its plastics”: <https://rco.on.ca/canada-recycles-just-9-per-cent-of-its-plastics/>

- Canada recycles 9 percent of its plastics, rest dumped in landfill, incinerators, or tossed away as litter (sent to developing countries?)
- Summary of report, Deloitte for Environment and Climate change Canada: “in 2016 more than 3.2 million metric tones of recycling ended up as garbage”
- Economic Study of the Canadian Plastic Society: “total amount of plastics consumed in Canada (2016) was 4.6 million metric tones” (majority of plastic waste comes from packaging ~ children’s toys, computers, automobile parts, electronics textiles, construction
- Catherine McKenna, Federal Environment minister, “Certainly, banning is one of them, but there are many other things that you need to do, from putting responsibility on producers ... to focusing on innovation ... to better waste management.”
- Deloitte’s report: “strong recycling industry with 90 percent recycling rate could lower greenhouse gas emissions & boost economy (create additional 17,000 direct jobs, 25,000 indirect jobs) ~ without major changes, plastic waste sent to landfill represent lost value of \$11.1 billion by 2031
- Business with companies that reduce single-use plastics, diminishing demand for oil

7. Matt Gurney, (May 28, 2019), “The Philippines has a bigger trash problem than Canada”: <https://www.macleans.ca/news/world/the-philippines-has-a-bigger-trash-problem-than-canada/>

- “Since China stopped accepting plastics, though, the country has been used as a dumping ground for waste from places like South Korea and Australia.”
- Philippines: Major Contributor to plastic pollution (world’s third-worse offender)
- Manila (population 13 million) daily output of trash at estimated 9,200 tons (only 85 percent is collected)



“Children play on a garbage-filled waterway in Manila on Jan. 17, 2018 (NOEL CELIS/AFP/Getting Images)”

## **LETTER OUTLINE:**

Contact:

Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/cleanbc-plastics-actions-plan-results/>

Introductory Paragraph: Who you are and why you are contacting them?

- My name
- "I am contacting over concern about Canadian garbage and recycling illegally shipping to developing countries"
- a teenage member of our society, worried over issue, etc (qualifications/reasons why)

Evidence 1: How Did this Situation Come to Light?

- Philippine/Canada situation
- Contamination of plastics to waste (non-homogenous recyclables)
- Worldwide amendments

Evidence 2: How/Why is this Happening?

- How/why Canadian plastics/waste is being shipped to other countries
- Illegal smuggling
- Why our system isn't working (Canada recycles 9 percent of it's plastics)

Evidence 3: Why it's a negative way to dealing with our waste?

- Harming developing countries (dumping our waste in one spot)
- My mom/grandparents immigrated from the Philippines, and I am half Filipino (why this issue matters to me, personally)

Conclusion: Call to action! What can we do, as a province, to help?

- Propose regulations on most/all single use plastics (or find biodegradable/sustainable alternatives)
- Recommend using reusable containers/mugs/bags/silverware/etc
- Propose a stronger recycling industry
- Work together to be more sustainable as a community (create less waste and encourage)