

Metro Vancouver's green waste diversion: A progress report

Total waste produced by single-family homes down by 66,000 tonnes

BY RANDY SHORE, VANCOUVER SUN JUNE 19, 2014



Collection of food and yard waste — called compostable organic waste — is now available to 95 per cent of Metro Vancouver's 302,000 single-family homes.

Photograph by: GORD GOBLE, Surrey NOW

Green carts for residential pickup were introduced in 2008 by Port Coquitlam. Collection of food and yard waste — called compostable organic waste — is now available to 95 per cent of Metro Vancouver's 302,000 single-family homes.

Widespread uptake of recycling and green waste diversion by homeowners has reduced the total weight of waste produced by single family homes by 26 per cent. The reduction — 66,000 tonnes — is enough to fill 8,300 garbage trucks.

Total waste produced by single-family homes:

2011: 254,000 tonnes

2012: 230,174 tonnes

2013: 188,000 tonnes

How are we doing?

58 per cent of all solid waste is recycled or diverted from landfill. Here's how it breaks down by source.

Single-family homes

Recycled: 56%

Disposed: 44%

Multi-family homes

Recycled: 27 per cent

Disposed: 73 per cent

Commercial/institutional

Recycled: 38 per cent

Disposed: 62 per cent

Drop-off waste

Recycled: 75 per cent

Disposed: 25 per cent

A long way to go

Single-family homes produce only a fraction of the compostable waste in Metro Vancouver, with commercial and institutional sources being major contributors.

Total disposed waste

998,275 tonnes

36.2% compostable organics

Drop-off waste

133,092 tonnes

16.1% compostable organic

Multi-family homes

206,412 tonnes

46.8% compostable organic

Single-family homes

230,174 tonnes

43.3% compostable organic

Commercial sector

428,597 tonnes

35.8% compostable organic

Source: Metro Vancouver 2012

Building capacity to divert compostable waste

Beginning in 2015, food and other organic waste will be banned from the landfill, potentially diverting an additional 265,000 tonnes of waste each year in addition to the 300,000 tonnes already being diverted. New and expanding compost and waste-to-energy facilities have been adding 60,000 tonnes of new capacity each year, according to Metro Vancouver.

Harvest Power operates five locations in Metro Vancouver with a combined capacity to take in 200,000 tonnes of organic waste each year. Composting operations and anaerobic digesters can produce 200,000 cubic yards of compost, 1.1 megawatts of electricity from biogas.

The City of Surrey is planning to build a new waste-to-energy biofuel facility with the capacity to process 80,000 tonnes of organic waste and produce enough biogas to fuel its waste truck fleet five times over.

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