

Too many recyclables, organic waste ends up in the landfill

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Metro Vancouver's waste stream continues to be littered with an over-abundance of food and plastics, but paper products aren't piling up as much they once were.

A 2013 waste composition monitoring study suggests food scraps remain the largest component of the overall waste stream, accounting for 30 per cent of all waste — and almost 42 per cent of waste from multi-family homes.

The findings come as Metro Vancouver is in the midst of banning all food waste from garbage bins across the region, effective next year.

Kitchen trash cans will be officially off limits to table scraps — including everything from tea bags and mashed potatoes to greasy paper towels and chicken bones — which are to be dumped into lawn clipping bins for curbside collection.

Metro Vancouver hopes to

divert 70 per cent of the region's waste from landfills by 2015 — up from 55 per cent now — and 80 per cent by 2020. Metro is consulting with municipalities, restaurants, grocery stores, garbage haulers and other stakeholders on how to implement the plan.

The amount of disposed plastics, particularly packaging and plastic films, has risen in the past two years with polystyrene the most prevalent recyclable plastic material still being disposed of in the region. The study noted that typically recycled plastics represent small quantities of the observed plastics.

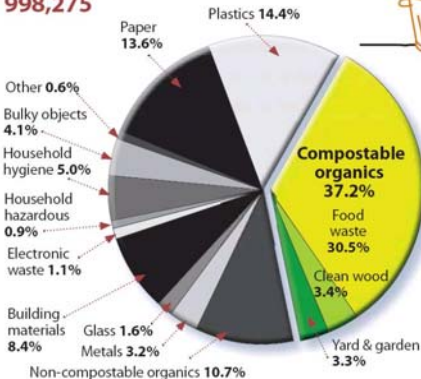
Paper in the waste stream continues to fall in tonnage and percentage.

The study analyzed the composition of waste from single- and multi-family homes, industrial, commercial and institutional facilities and the garbage dropped off by self-haulers at regional facilities.

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DUMPING GROUNDS

Total disposed tonnes
998,275



Compostable organics — food, wood and yard and garden material — accounted for the bulk of Metro's waste in 2012, as the main graphic shows. The smaller graphics show the percentage of organics among waste dumped, by source.



Single Family

230,174 tonnes

Compostable organics

43.3%



Industrial, commercial, institutional
428,597 tonnes
Com. organics
35.8%



Self-haul, drop-off
133,092 tonnes
Com. organics
16.1%



Multi-family homes
206,412 tonnes
Com. organics
46.8%



Source: Metro Vancouver Recycling and Solid Waste Management 2012 Report

SF garbage only 23% of total