



The Catholic Women's League of Canada Position Paper

TITLE: Waste Management

POSITION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada acknowledges that waste management is a societal issue and that better waste management practices are essential to ensure cleaner air, cleaner water, more sustainable use of natural resources and the recovery and reuse of many waste materials.

- The League concurs with the Earth Day statement, "We need to act (boldly), innovate (broadly), and implement (equitably). It's going to take all of us. All in. Businesses, governments and citizens—everyone accounted for, and everyone accountable. A partnership for the planet" (Earth Day 2022).

BACKGROUND

The federal government defines "waste" as any non-hazardous or hazardous material that has no further use and is managed at recycling, processing or disposal sites. Municipal solid waste (MSW) refers to recyclables, compostable materials, and garbage from households, businesses, institutions, and construction and demolition sites. Solid waste is buried in landfills, incinerated, recycled or composted (Canada, Statistics Canada, "Human Activity").

Organic materials, such as food, yard waste and paper, are of significant concern because they generate methane, a potent greenhouse gas when deposited in landfills. This process unfolds over several years, indicating that the methane emissions from landfills today are the consequence of organic waste disposal practices spanning several decades. Methane has 28 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide over 100 years. It accounts for about 30% of the global temperature rise, with landfills contributing 17% of Canada's methane emissions and 3% of its greenhouse gases. Reducing methane emissions from all sources, including landfills, is an important way to counter global warming of the earth (Canada; "Waste and Greenhouse Gases").

The 2011 Statistics Canada paper, *Human Activity and the Environment* describes solid wastes as "produced by nearly every kind of business or household activity, from large-scale manufacturing processes to simple day-to-day living..." and buried in landfills, incinerated, recycled or composted. A 2020 Statistics Canada survey states that better waste management practices are required to ensure cleaner air, cleaner water, and more sustainable use of natural resources. Under the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, federal, provincial and territorial government ministers work together to improve waste reduction policies and practices across Canada.

Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, speaks to society's throwaway culture. "We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them."

All government levels share the responsibility for managing and reducing waste. Municipal governments manage household waste collection, recycling, composting and disposal. Provincial and territorial authorities establish waste reduction policies and programs and approve and monitor waste management

facilities and operations. The federal government complements the activities of the other government levels by controlling international and interprovincial movements of hazardous waste and hazardous recyclable material and identifying approaches and best practices to reduce pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions from the management of waste (“Waste Management”; Statistics Canada).

An example of federal government support and progress in methane production control is the federal government’s proposal in 2024 for a regulatory approach to manage methane emissions from landfills. Additionally, the government established the Canada Community-Building Fund, which provides annual funding to provinces, territories and, by extension to, municipalities for the strategic development of landfill gas management infrastructure projects (Canada).

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

- Become knowledgeable in Catholic social teaching about environmental stewardship and reflect on and embrace the call to action in *Laudato Si’*.
- Be informed about waste disposal practices and participate in efforts to reduce, reuse, repair, rot (compost), recycle, repurpose and refuse to buy or accept products that can harm the environment.
- Advocate for and monitor the progress of integrated waste management.
- Become educated about Earth Day and participate in its initiatives, such as The Great Global Cleanup and the End Plastic Pollution Campaign.
- Monitor government waste-related regulations and legislation and advocate for waste management strategies through resolutions and actions such as letter writing.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Canada, Environment and Climate Change. “The Government of Canada Introduces New Measures to Regulate Methane Emissions from Canadian Landfills.” www.canada.ca, 28 June 2024, www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2024/06/the-government-of-canada-introduces-new-measures-to-regulate-methane-emissions-from-canadian-landfills.html.

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“Earth Day 2022: Invest in Our Planet.” *Earth Day*, www.earthday.org/earth-day-2022/.

Francis. “Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home.” The Holy See, 2015, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html.

“Human Activity and the Environment.” *Statistics Canada*, Statistics Canada, Environment Accounts and Statistics Division, June 2011, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/16-201-x/16-201-x2011000-eng.pdf?st=kIGGGdnn.

Statistics Canada. "Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey: Solid Waste and Asset Management, 2020." *The Daily*, 28 Oct. 2022, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221028/dq221028b-eng.htm.

STATUS

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