



Canadian Council of Ministers  
of the Environment    Le Conseil canadien  
des ministres  
de l'environnement

## CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS AIM FOR ZERO PLASTIC WASTE

**Ottawa, ON – November 23, 2018** – Today, federal, provincial and territorial environment ministers agreed to work collectively toward a common goal of zero plastic waste. To this end, they approved in principle a Canada-wide strategy on zero plastic waste, which outlines a vision to keep all plastics in the economy and out of the environment.

“Plastics play an important role in our economy and in the daily lives of Canadians, but over 89% end up in landfill or the environment,” said Catherine McKenna, federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, who hosted her colleagues via teleconference. “This strategy aims to contribute to changing that and stimulate innovation in plastics. Canadians want action now to address plastic pollution and waste.”

The strategy aligns with the Ocean Plastics Charter—a key outcome of Canada’s G7 Presidency—and was developed with input from industry, non-governmental organizations and Canadians. It outlines areas where changes are needed across the plastic lifecycle, from design to collection, clean-up and value recovery, and underscores the economic and business opportunities resulting from long-lasting and durable plastics.

“We all have a role to play in eliminating plastic waste. Canadians want to do more. We want to come up with new solutions and we want to change how we use plastics,” said Margaret Miller, Nova Scotia Minister of Environment and incoming CCME President. “This strategy recognizes the role we all must play to encourage new solutions.”

Ministers recognized the importance plastics continue to play in the economy and of supporting innovation for more sustainable solutions and technologies in waste management. Zero plastic waste does not mean eliminating the use of plastic products. Instead, the strategy calls for actions that lead to the prevention of plastic waste, as well as improved collection and cleanup. This would result in greater capacity to recover plastics’ value and keep them in the economy and out of our oceans, lakes, including the Great Lakes, and other waterways and the natural environment. Protecting our terrestrial and aquatic environment from plastic pollution is imperative for the health of freshwater ecosystems, and is also important as the water and litter flow directly into oceans.

Ministers directed officials to develop an action plan that sets out the measures and actions needed to implement the strategy for their consideration at the 2019 ministers meeting. The plan will be developed in collaboration with stakeholders from across the plastics value chain and with a range of other interested parties. It will be implemented within the jurisdictional authority of each order of government and recognize the shared responsibility between jurisdictions for preventing plastic waste, providing for flexibility for jurisdictions to implement actions that meet their unique individual needs. The plan will also recognize the roles of industry, communities and consumers, and will support the innovation and behavioural changes that are also required.

Today ministers endorsed a Canada-wide aspirational waste reduction goal, meant to encourage and highlight waste reduction progress in Canada. In 2014, each Canadian threw away an average of 706 kg of all types of waste (as per Statistics Canada). The Canada-wide target is to reduce this number to 490 kg per person (a 30% reduction) by 2030, and to 350 kg per person (a 50% reduction) by 2040.

This Canada-wide aspirational waste reduction goal does not set a specific jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction target. It will complement waste reduction efforts within each jurisdiction. Canada is on its way to meeting the 2030 goal, as some jurisdictions have adopted ambitious policies and programs to prevent and divert major waste streams such as organics and packaging. Meeting the aspirational goal will require significant effort and investment to support end-markets for waste, a transformational shift in culture and behavior, and the need to address unique challenges in some geographic areas and sectors.

Today ministers also approved in principle a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Mutual Aid for Environmental Emergencies. The MOU enhances the ability of jurisdictions to respond to environmental emergencies by facilitating the voluntary provision of aid across jurisdictional boundaries, including, but not limited to personnel, equipment, and expertise. It will strengthen cooperation between participating parties in order to minimize environmental impacts. The MOU will come into force when it is approved and signed by governments through their own procedures.

Ministers discussed the importance of ensuring that the implementation of proposed changes to how major projects are assessed respect provincial and federal jurisdiction and strive for “one project, one assessment.” Ministers agreed that continued collaboration and meaningful engagement was important, including on supporting regulations and policies, to ensure that good projects go forward in a clear, timely and transparent process.

Finally, ministers were provided with an update on the collaborative work by jurisdictions on international mitigation and received the report and recommendations on guidance for greenhouse gas offset design elements, contributing to a potential future voluntary pan-Canadian offsets framework that jurisdictions may apply as appropriate to their programs.

Moving forward, Nova Scotia has assumed the presidency of CCME and will host the 2019 CCME meeting in Halifax.

### ***About CCME***

CCME is the primary minister-led intergovernmental forum for collective action on environmental issues of national and international concern. CCME is comprised of the environment ministers from the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. It was founded in 1964. [www.ccme.ca](http://www.ccme.ca)

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