

Ontario Incineration Factsheet

- Incineration competes directly with recycling for the high-energy content of the waste stream, such as paper, organics, certain plastics.
- Incineration is energy inefficient. Incinerators typically require inputs of high value supplemental fuels such as natural gas to operate, with the result that they can be significant net energy consumers. Thus they require more energy inputs in supplemental fuels than they ever produce in electricity or useable heat.
- Recycling is a much more efficient way of recovering the energy embedded in products than incineration.
- Even widespread incineration of provincial municipal waste would make only a small contribution to Ontario's electricity needs.
- Incineration will not eliminate the need for landfill. In fact, once recyclables have been diverted, the remaining waste stream consists largely of materials that have low energy content and will not burn well, or of materials such as hard to recycle plastics which contain high levels of toxic chemicals.
- The ash from incinerators is typically classified as hazardous and has to be sent to a hazardous waste landfill.
- Globally, incinerators remain a significant source of toxic air pollutants, smog and acid rain precursors and greenhouse gases.
- Although new incinerator designs and technologies have reduced releases of some toxic air pollutants, they have not reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- Incinerators produce more cadmium, mercury and greenhouse gases per unit of electricity than natural gas or coal.
- Incineration is expensive, particularly due to the need for supplemental fuel, extensive waste stream pre-processing and air emission controls.
- Recent attempts to use new technologies such as gasification and pyrolysis to incinerate municipal waste in the United States, Australia and Germany have largely ended in failure because they exceeded air emission standards or were prone to costly breakdowns and technical failures.

For more information, please read our [Media Release](#)