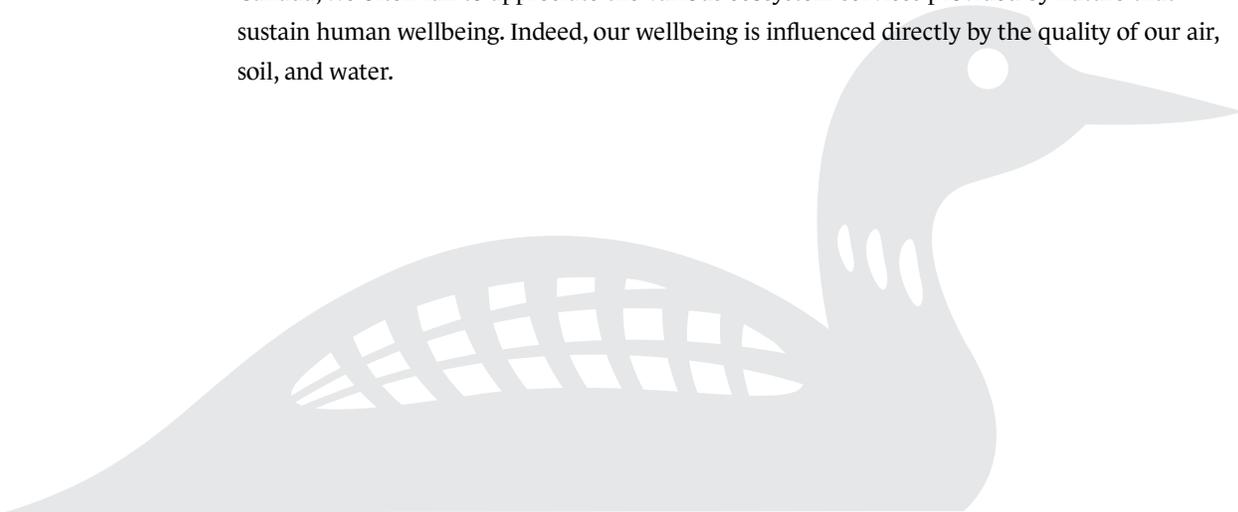




ENVIRONMENT

The environment is the foundation upon which human societies are built and the source of our sustained wellbeing. On a broader level, environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all of our natural resources.

The environment is the basis for our health, our communities, and our economy. Despite its fundamental importance to human existence and the natural resource wealth it provides to Canada, we often fail to appreciate the various ecosystem services provided by nature that sustain human wellbeing. Indeed, our wellbeing is influenced directly by the quality of our air, soil, and water.



AIR QUALITY

Greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) – a major contributor to climate change – have been declining slowly in recent years in Ontario. Much of this reduction is due to the slowing of manufacturing, increased energy efficiency, and especially the closure of coal-fired electricity generation plants in recent years. In addition, the reduction of household emissions through conservation efforts has been, on a proportional basis, a significant factor in helping to reduce overall emissions. Ontarians are doing their part.

Total greenhouse gas emissions from the largest facilities in Oxford County were 0.8 megatonnes of CO₂ in 2015, which represents a small portion of the provincial total (1.8%). Oxford County is therefore not a major contributor to the overall provincial total of GHG emissions. By way of comparison, all of the large facilities throughout the West Region generated 26.4 megatonnes of CO₂ in 2015, which represents more than half (57.9%) of the total emissions for the province as a whole.⁵ The West Region's contribution to the provincial total is due largely to a few significant areas with a concentration of GHG generating facilities, and Oxford County represents just 3.1% of the regional total. Areas within the West Region that are principally responsible for the GHG emissions are Hamilton (steel plants) and Lambton County (City of Sarnia, which is a chemical and gas production centre).

WATER QUALITY

The relative abundance of fresh water in the province is a tremendous benefit enjoyed by all Ontarians, including residents of Oxford County, which draws much of its drinking water from ground water. The quality of fresh water in West Region, as measured by its pH level, is 8.3, which is slightly alkaline, but well within acceptable limits. Fresh water in Oxford County has a pH level of 8.2, which is identical to the province as a whole.

⁵Data on greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are taken from the *Reported Facility GHG Data* available from Environment and Climate Change Canada (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/ges-ghg/default.asp?lang=En&n=8044859A>), and represent only one part of total GHGs in Ontario; that is, only emissions generated by the largest operations in the province are reported.

WASTE REDUCTION

In Ontario, the percentage of all residential and non-residential waste diverted from landfill, mainly through recycling programs, is about 25%. About 60% of all waste in Ontario is generated by the non-residential sector (e.g., factories, shopping malls, universities), yet it diverts only about 13% of the waste from landfill.

In contrast, residential waste accounts for about one-quarter of the provincial total, yet Ontarians are diverting 47.3% of their waste from landfills, mainly through recycling via the Blue Box and Green Bin programs, and this rate has been improving in recent years.⁶ While residents of Ontario are doing their part, recycling rates overall have remained largely the same over the past decade.

In Oxford County, the residential waste reduction rate (55.1%) is significantly higher than the rates for West Region (43.2%) and Ontario overall (47.3%). This higher rate is likely due both to a rapid expansion of recycling programs in the County and greater awareness of recycling programs and feelings of environmental responsibility among residents. In addition, the County has a comparatively lower concentration of heavy industry, which as a sector, recycles less than residents do.



waste
diversion rate

OXFORD	55.1%
WEST	43.2%
ONTARIO	47.3%

⁶ Government of Ontario. (2015). *Strategy for a waste free Ontario: Building the circular economy*. (Draft for consultation). Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer of Ontario. Available from: http://www.downloads.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/env_reg/er/documents/2015/012-5834_DraftStrategy.pdf