

## Update on Recycling Markets – December 2018

### New restrictions update

Some degree of market uncertainty for recycling is expected to continue into 2019. The Chinese Government recently confirmed that it will ban additional recovered materials (starting at the end of 2018). Clarification of what will and will not be included in the ban should come in the coming months. The ban does not include old corrugated cardboard or any other recovered fiber, indicating paper grades that meet the stringent standard (other than mixed paper) can still flow into China for the foreseeable future.

### Cardboard and Mixed Paper

The biggest impact of new policy from China has been the disruption of recovered paper fibre markets, which constitutes the largest amount of marketed material by weight in most curbside programs. In the last year, the average price per tonne for cardboard has declined by up to 45% and mixed paper has fallen to a negative value. Some of the higher grade paper materials, such as sorted office paper, have seen an increase in price while mixed paper continues to struggle but appears to have bottomed<sup>1</sup>.

### Plastic

Due to low oil prices, market prices for plastics have fallen significantly as using virgin materials has become consistently more cost-effective than sorting and processing recycled material. The only plastic with some value as of November 2018, was PET (Plastic 1) and HDPE (Plastic 2). There have been many municipalities across North America (including several in Alberta) that have recently removed plastic 3-7 from their curbside program because they were unable to find viable markets.

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<sup>1</sup> Waste 360. (2018, November <https://www.waste360.com/financials/themes-third-quarter-2018>).

## Saskatoon Curbside Recycling Material Characterization

Table 2 shows a breakdown by material of tonnages in the curbside recycling program from 2013 to 2017. Contamination is defined as non-recyclable material (such as garbage) placed in the recycling cart by the resident. Residual materials are recyclable but cannot be captured during the sorting process, often because they are too small. As shown, paper and cardboard make up over 70% of total material.

Table 2: City of Saskatoon – Curbside Recycling Material Breakdown  
(Using program characterization information from 2013 to 2017)

<b>Material</b>	<b>Percent % (by weight)</b>
Cardboard and Paper Total Newspaper (26.5%) Cardboard (21%) Mixed paper (25.8%)	73.3%
Metal Total Tin (1.85%) Aluminum (0.30%)	2.2%
Plastic 1-7 Total Plastic 1 (1.47%) Plastic 2 (1.85%) Plastic (Mixed) 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (1.56%) Plastic Film (1.77%)	6.7%
Beverage Deposit	1.5%
Glass Total Unbroken glass (0.6%) Broken glass Total (3.3%)	3.9%
Contamination	8%
Residuals	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>