

WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKYARD

NEWSLETTER ON COMMUNITY RIGHT-TO-KNOW & THE NATIONAL
POLLUTANT RELEASE INVENTORY

SOURCE: CANVA

Inside Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory

BY JOHN JACKSON AND FE DE LEON

This is an occasional newsletter providing updates on our work as the environmental members of the Consultative Work Group (formerly the Multi-Stakeholder Work Group) on the National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI).

From time to time, you will also receive action updates. For example, when the government decided how to add Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) to NPRI reporting, we shared details of the decision and outlined its strengths and weaknesses.

Our objective in putting together this newsletter is to make you more aware of the NPRI, to help you see how the NPRI can add value to your work, and to work with you as we work to improve the NPRI.

About NPRI

The NPRI is an inventory mandated by the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) that requires certain facilities to report annually on specified pollutants they release into the environment. It is Canada's information repository on the release of environmental contaminants to air, land, water, off and on-site transfer, disposal and recycling.

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NPRI Consultative Work Group

Environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), citizen action groups, concerned individual citizens, and indigenous groups must play critically important roles if community-right-to-know is to be achieved through the NPRI program.

Meet the NPRI Consultative Work Group NGO Members

We have one new member, Rodrique Turgeon (MiningWatch Canada, Ottawa), who has replaced Jamie Kneen on the work group. Jamie had been a member of the Work Group for several years, bringing us his wisdom and years of experience. Jamie is still MiningWatch's Outreach Coordinator and Program Manager for Western and Northern Canada. Rodrique is Program Manager for Eastern Canada. He is also a lawyer. We appreciate the skills that Rodrique brings us.

The current ENGO members of the government's NPRI Consultative Work Group are:

- **Dakota Norris** (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan),
- **Fe de Leon** (Canadian Environmental Law Association, Toronto, Ontario),
- **John Jackson** (Citizens' Network on Waste Management, Kitchener, Ontario),
- **Ian Peace** (Friends of Fish Society, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia)
- **Crystal Stamp-Cardinal** (Keepers of the Water Society, Treaty 6, 7, 8 and 11 Territories, Alberta and Northwest Territories),
- **Heather Fast** (Manitoba Eco-Network, Winnipeg, Manitoba),
- **Rodrique Turgeon** (Mining Watch Canada, Ottawa, Ontario), and
- **Melanie Langille** (NB Lung, Fredericton, New Brunswick).



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What's Ahead for NPRI: Priorities for 2025–2027

In the inaugural issue of this newsletter, What's in Your Backyard, released in November 2024, we introduced the National Pollutant Multi-stakeholder Work Group and its role in supporting the objectives of the NPRI. This stakeholder Work Group has been renamed the NPRI Consultative Work Group, but its role remains similar. The NGO members of the Work Group provide input to the government on the NPRI, focused on:

- changes to the NPRI substance list
- reporting rules
- data gaps and quality
- public access to pollution data

In the current cycle of work of the Consultative Work Group between 2025 and 2027, here are a few key areas of focus:

- Establish the Oil Sands Data Quality Work Group (OSDQ) to review the reporting of releases to air from the oil sands sector. The work of the OSDQ Sub Group began in 2025 and is expected to continue through 2027, with active participation from members of the NPRI Consultative Work Group (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Friends of Fish Society and Keepers of the Water Society).
- Review decisions on reporting to the NPRI from several sectors and activities, including the upstream oil and gas sector, on criteria air contaminants and hydraulic fracturing.
- Evaluate decisions from Canada's Chemicals Management Plan to determine if substances should be added or if those substances already covered in the NPRI should have alternate reporting requirements. Currently, no substances are under consideration.
- Undertake an evaluation of past changes to reporting requirements for substances listed to Part 1B (alternate threshold substances) to inform if further changes are required. No changes to reporting requirements is expected under this cycle.
- Initial work will also focus on off-site disposal and transfer data, an area of work that has not been reviewed by NPRI. To see the broader analysis planned by ENGO's see article in this newsletter entitled "Using NPRI off-site transfer data."
- NGOs will look at the NPRI program and consider how to incorporate environmental justice into this data.

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What's Ahead for NPRI: Priorities for 2025–2027 (cont'd)

Also in late 2026, the Consultative Work Group will look at the data for PFAS substances reported for the first time in NPRI for 2025. We sent you the following blogs earlier in the year.

- ["Forever" and "Everywhere" Chemicals Added to Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory](#) by John Jackson and Fe de Leon, April 8, 2025.
- [The Good and Not-so-Good of PFAS Reporting under Canada's Community Right to Know Pollution Inventory](#) by John Jackson and Fe de Leon, April 8, 2025.

When we receive the first NPRI data on PFAS later in 2026, we will report on the progress in these areas in our next issue of What's in Your Backyard.

Where Pollution Goes: Understanding Off-Site Transfers

Have you used the NPRI data for off-site transfers for disposal, recycling, and treatment, including energy from waste, and wastewater treatment?

This information is important to help a community not only understand the threats to your community from local facilities, but also to understand to what extent the problems created in your community may be transferred elsewhere, including across international borders, creating problems elsewhere.

A team of ENGOs is assessing the NPRI off-site transfer system to assess the quality of this NPRI data as well as to understand how easy it is for communities to access and use this data. We are looking at both the facilities that are transferring NPRI substances elsewhere, and those facilities that receive transfers. We will be making recommendations for improvement.

The team working on this project is Daniel Green (Société pour vaincre la pollution), John Jackson (Citizens' Network on Waste Management), and Fe de Leon (Canadian Environmental Law Association).

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Where Pollution Goes: Understanding Off-Site Transfers (cont'd)

If you have tried using the off-site transfer data or the NPRI release and transfer data from the facilities that receive transfers, **please tell us about your experience.**

- **Were you able to learn what you wanted to learn?**
- **How was the data of use to you?**
- **What challenges did you encounter when accessing the data?**

Please contact John Jackson jjackson@web.ca with your thoughts.

Finding Pollution Data in Your Community

Have you ever tried to use the NPRI site? It can be daunting to do so.

NGO members of the NPRI Consultative Work Group, Crystal Stamp-Cardinal of Keepers of the Water and Fe de Leon of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, conducted a webinar on **how to find information about polluters in your community on the NPRI website.**



Source: Presentation "Exploring Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory" Slide 1

During the session, Crystal visited the NPRI site and demonstrated basic search techniques. Luckily, we recorded the session. The lesson is readily available to you.

An excellent beginner's guide to using the NPRI Search Tools.

[Watch the Webinar](#)

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How Activists have Used NPRI in their Work

When “no data” is just the information you’re looking for

Karen Wirsig is Senior Program Manager for Plastics at Environmental Defence Canada. A former journalist and community and labour organizer, she understands the value of data to support social and environmental protection. Karen wrote this in May, 2025.

Here is a brief commentary

As an environmental advocate, organizer and policy wonk, I love the National Pollutant Release Inventory. This vast record of pollution information has helped me better understand pollution hotspots around the country and what types of toxic substances are most likely to be emitted from the industrial facilities I follow most closely: petrochemical plants, plastic resin manufacturers, recyclers and waste management facilities.

One plant that sparked my interest was reported as an “innovator” in recycling Edmonton’s municipal waste, including “hard-to-recycle plastics.” Enerkem was touted in a variety of industry reports as proof that “advanced recycling” of plastics is commercially viable.

Meanwhile, environmental organizations in North America – including Greenpeace, GAIA and the National Research Defence Council – had been reporting on the fact that many “innovative” plastic recycling projects announced to great fanfare in media releases had never come to fruition. The few that operate, all in the US, generate concerning pollution.

Enerkem was attempting to use an incineration technology known as gasification to turn waste into fuel. Because the media and industry reports suggested it was operating, I figured it, too, might be generating toxic emissions.

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How Activists have Used NPRI in their Work (cont'd)

Commentary continued

I made a first visit to the NPRI website in 2021 to find out what the facility was reporting. The report for 2019 indicated that Enerkem's main releases were carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxides. The amounts seemed lower than those of other waste incinerators - until I noted under the "Shutdown" section that the facility was shut down for 60 per cent of the days in that year for "maintenance and projects."

By 2022 I had been to visit the facility and understood it was not operating at all. The company's report for 2021 indicated that the facility was fully shut down between March and December that year due to "MPC failure." The 2022 report confirmed the facility remained shut down for all of that year. Then the 2023 report indicated the facility was shut down for 325 days that year. None of this adds up to commercial success.

Sure enough, the company announced the permanent closure of the facility in 2024 and, earlier this year, entered bankruptcy protection in Quebec, where it is based.

In the meantime, the NPRI reporting provided proof of Enerkem's failure to a community group in the U.S. midwest, which was opposing a project proposal using the Edmonton facility as its proof of concept.

Sometimes it's the information you're NOT looking for in the NPRI that's the most telling.
- Karen Wirsig, May 2025

If you have had any experiences with making a difference through your use of NPRI data, please contact John Jackson at jjackson@web.ca.

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Pollution Prevention on the International Stage

In February 2025, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), representing Canada, Mexico, and the United States, held a conference on North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Registries (NAPRTs). The Pollutant Release Transfer Registry for Canada is the NPRI. NPRI NGO Consultative Work Group member John Jackson presented a paper entitled ["Pollution Prevention: An ENGO Perspective."](#)

A major focus of John's presentation was that PRTRs fail to properly distinguish between Pollution Prevention (PP) and Pollution Control (PC).

Understanding the pollutants in your backyard

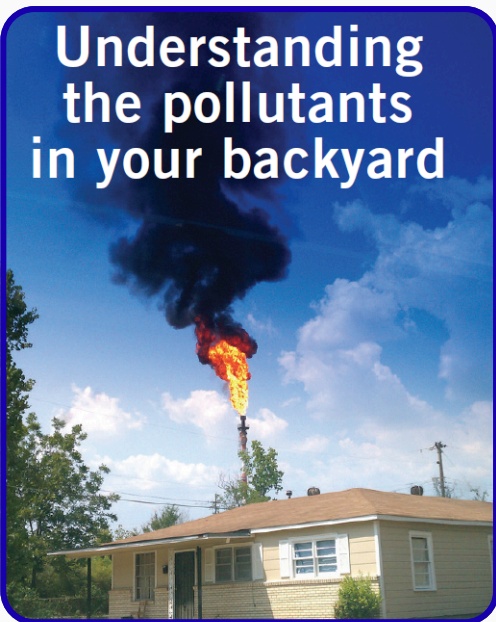


Photo Credit: Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Pollution Prevention means avoiding contamination of the environment and threats to life by not using or creating toxic substances in the first place, by redesigning products and processes so toxic substances are not needed, and substituting non-toxic substances for toxic substances.

PP is the only effective way of avoiding contamination. Because of the failure to properly distinguish PP from PC, PRTRs grossly exaggerate the amount of PP occurring.

For example, in NPRI data for 2022, only 20% of the so-called PP data really was PP.

Eighty percent of the so-called PP was actually pollution control activities. This is very misleading. It causes people to presume that polluters have been much more effective at avoiding contamination than they actually have been.

Under the NPRI workplan for the next three years, NPRI ENGOs will work with NPRI to improve the usefulness of pollution prevention reporting.

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NPRI in the News

Canada's National Observer covers NPRI

On August 1, 2025, Canada's National Observer released an article by Marc Fawcett-Atkinson entitled ["Is Canada's pollution database hiding toxic spills in plain sight?"](#)



PHOTO BY ELLA IVANESCU/UNSPLASH

Some of the main points made in the article include: "doesn't account for relative toxicity" [Tony Walker, Dalhousie University]; thresholds too high and "aren't being used to address the cumulative exposures that occur in hotspots such as Chemical Valley [Sarnia]" [Cassie Barker, Environmental Defence]; thresholds aren't "enough to capture the full impact of the class of about 16,000 PFAS chemicals" [Fe de Leon, Canadian Environmental Law association]. A quote from John Jackson of the Citizens' Network on Waste Management concludes the article with:

"..because it [NPRI] is so important, we are dedicated to making it better all the time. So it's not to get rid of it, but to keep making it better." - John Jackson

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Tools, Updates, and How to Stay Connected

ENGO NPRI Website and Newsletter

We hope you have been using our NPRI section on the Canadian Environmental Law Association's (CELA) website: <https://cela.ca/community-right-to-know/>. This link will update you on work that we have been conducting as the environmental members of the NPRI's Consultative Work Group.

Throughout this newsletter, you will find links to website resources. If you have any suggestions to improve the website, **please email Fe de Leon at deleonf@cela.ca.**

If you have any items from your experience using NPRI data that you think would be valuable to have in the ENGO newsletter, **please get in touch with John Jackson at jjackson@web.ca.**

Federal Government's NPRI Website and Newsletter

In July 2025, the federal government launched a new NPRI newsletter. The NPRI staff responded as follows to the questions we asked about the new NPRI government newsletter:

1. Link to the newsletter: [National Pollutant Release Inventory Newsletter - Canada.ca](https://www24.international.gc.ca/npri/npri-eng/index.aspx)

NPRI staff noted that they are still seeking the most appropriate way to publish their newsletter. They said, "We are exploring options that respect our internal policies while ensuring stakeholders can access the newsletter as smoothly as possible."

2. Types of materials included: "The newsletter will include updates on NPRI data releases, program news, and other resources relevant to stakeholders."
3. Frequency of updates: "Once fully operational, the newsletter will be published periodically - once or twice a year."

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Tools, Updates, and How to Stay Connected

Federal Government's NPRI Website and Newsletter (cont'd)

4. Notification of updates: "Stakeholders will be able to register to receive notifications once the newsletter platform is fully functional."

5. Comments or suggestions: Feedback on the newsletter can be sent to Amelie.Pelletier@ec.gc.ca

The Federal Government's NPRI data website for data searches:

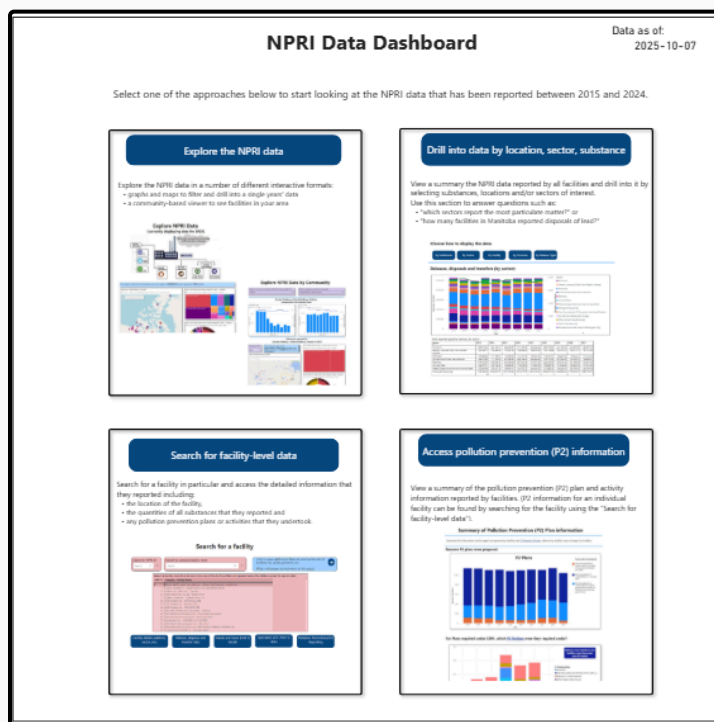
<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/pollution-waste-management/national-pollutant-release-inventory.html>

Search the National Pollutant Release Inventory Dashboard

This dashboard can be navigated using a mouse or a keyboard. For mouse users, you can navigate as you would a regular webpage.

There are four approaches to select from to start examining the NPRI data reported between 2015 and 2024.

- Explore the NPRI data in a number of different interactive formats.
- Drill into the data by location, sector and substance.
- Search for facility-level data.
- View a summary of the pollution prevention (P2) information.



Source: Environment and Climate Change Canada, NPRI Dashboard (2025)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/national-pollutant-release-inventory/tools-resources-data/all-year-dashboard.html>

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SOURCE: CANVA

Please send short stories on ways that you have used NPRI data in your work for us to use in future newsletters.

Also send comments and ideas for what you would like to see in the newsletter to John Jackson.

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For information on the involvement of NGOs on the NPRI Consultative WG
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