

2026

CANADA'S PLASTICS SECTOR



**CHEMISTRY INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

CANADA'S PLASTICS SECTOR

Plastics are a foundational material found in **homes, vehicles, hospitals, food systems**, and many **critical infrastructures**. They are the backbone of multiple Canadian industries including defense, aerospace, automotive, mining, renewable energy, medical, and pharmaceuticals.

Plastics support our modern way of life in many ways including:

Food Systems & Packaging

Materials that protect food and extend shelf life



Housing & Construction

Insulation, pipes, wiring and building materials



Automotive

Vehicle components, safety systems and electronics



Healthcare

Sterile medical devices and diagnostic equipment



Natural Resources

Industrial piping, safety equipment and infrastructure



WHO WE ARE

The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada is the association for leaders in Canada's chemistry and plastic sector—adding **\$64 billion** and **\$39 billion** respectively to the Canadian economy. The Association represents over **100 members and partners across the country**. We provide coordination and leadership on key issues including innovation, investment, plastics, taxation, health and safety, environment, and regulatory initiatives.

Advancing a Circular Plastics Economy

Governments should approach plastics policy with a dual objective: improving environmental outcomes while strengthening domestic industrial capacity. Canada has made plastics pollution a national priority, but the focus must be on delivering real, measurable environmental outcomes. Rather than focusing solely on restriction or reduction, policy frameworks should prioritize building a circular economy that keeps materials in use, supports recycling infrastructure, and creates end markets for recycled content. This means aligning regulations, standards, and incentives so that investment flows into collection, sorting, and advanced recycling, enabling Canada to capture more value from plastics instead of exporting it or sending it to landfill.

Plastics are often framed narrowly in environmental debates, but they are essential industrial materials that underpin modern life and sustainability goals. Treating plastics as a strategic enabler—while scaling circular solutions—will be key to achieving both environmental and economic outcomes. Canada would benefit from a renewed, outcomes-focused national framework for plastics; one that recognizes plastics as a resource and that aligns federal leadership with provincial waste management systems, supports innovation and investment, and creates clear, practical pathways to build a made-in-Canada circular economy.

Such a framework should prioritize:

- Federal-provincial-territorial coordination, recognizing shared jurisdiction over environmental issues with provinces and territories delivering solutions through waste management and recycling systems.
- Regulatory alignment and implementation clarity, ensuring policy tools are workable and support investment rather than create fragmentation.
- Partnership with industry, whose role in product design, recycling innovation and infrastructure development is essential.
- Transparent engagement with civil society, reinforcing public confidence and accountability.
- A focus on measurable environmental outcomes, including keeping plastics in use and out of the environment.

Done right, post consumer plastics policy can both reduce environmental impact and position Canada as a leader in sustainable materials management.



PLASTICS INDUSTRY EXPLAINED

The Plastics Supply Chain

1

RESIN AND POLYMER PRODUCTION

The first stage involves producing plastic resins from raw materials such as natural gas liquids, crude oil derivatives, or bio-based feedstocks. Petrochemical companies convert these inputs into polymers (e.g., polyethylene, polypropylene, PET), which are formed into resin pellets and sold to converters.

Shipments of
\$11.3 billion annually

Exports of
\$8.9 billion annually

7,039 jobs with
\$570 million in wages paid

2

CONVERTING AND MANUFACTURING

Processors convert resin pellets into finished or semi-finished products using techniques like injection molding, extrusion, blow molding, thermoforming, or film production. This stage produces packaging, automotive parts, consumer goods, medical supplies, and more.

Shipments of
\$35.8 billion annually

Exports of
\$14.8 billion annually

83,000 jobs with
\$5.57 billion in wages paid

3

CONSUMER PURCHASES

Brand owners—including consumer goods companies, food and beverage producers, and retailers—represent the critical interface between the plastics industry and the end consumer. Through the products they market and sell, they translate upstream plastic production into widespread economic activity and everyday utility. Consumer purchases of plastic-containing products drive demand across the entire plastics value chain, supporting jobs, investment, and economic activity from manufacturing through to retail.

4

PLASTICS AT THEIR END OF LIFE

Canada has both mechanical and chemical recycling systems in place, and most plastics are recyclable; however, increased government investment is needed to strengthen infrastructure and support the transition to a more circular economy – keeping plastics in use and out of landfills. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs, which require companies to finance and manage the collection and recycling of their packaging, are being implemented across the country, with most provinces already having systems in place or underway. Canada is on track to reach 90% national EPR coverage by 2027, representing a significant shift in a short period.

BY THE NUMBERS – PLASTICS IN CANADA

7+ MILLION TONNES of plastics used annually in Canada supporting thousands of products used every day.



QUEBEC

Plastics manufacturing in Quebec supports a diverse industrial base, including packaging, aerospace, consumer products, and advanced manufacturing. The sector plays a key role in supplying materials for both domestic industries and international export markets.

PLASTIC PRODUCTS

Shipments/revenues **\$9.2 billion**
Exports **\$2.6 billion** annually
Employment **22,673**
Wages **\$1.550 billion**

RESINS

Shipments of **\$1.2 billion** in 2025
Exports **\$870 million** annually
Employment **1,080**
Wages **\$82 million**



ONTARIO

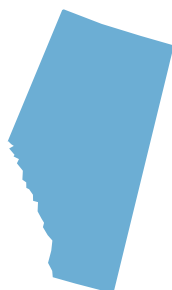
Plastics manufacturing in Ontario supports Canada's largest industrial base, including automotive, packaging, construction, and consumer goods. The province is home to highly integrated supply chains that produce components for both domestic use and export markets.

PLASTIC PRODUCTS

Shipments/revenues **\$19.3 billion**
Exports **\$13.9 billion** annually
Employment **43,128**
Wages **\$2.786 billion**

RESINS

Shipments of **\$4.14 billion** in 2025
Exports **\$3.8 billion** annually
Employment **4,176**
Wages **\$301 million**



ALBERTA

Plastics manufacturing in Alberta is closely tied to the province's petrochemical sector, producing resins and plastic products that support packaging, construction, energy, and industrial applications. Alberta is a major hub for upstream plastics production and export-oriented manufacturing.

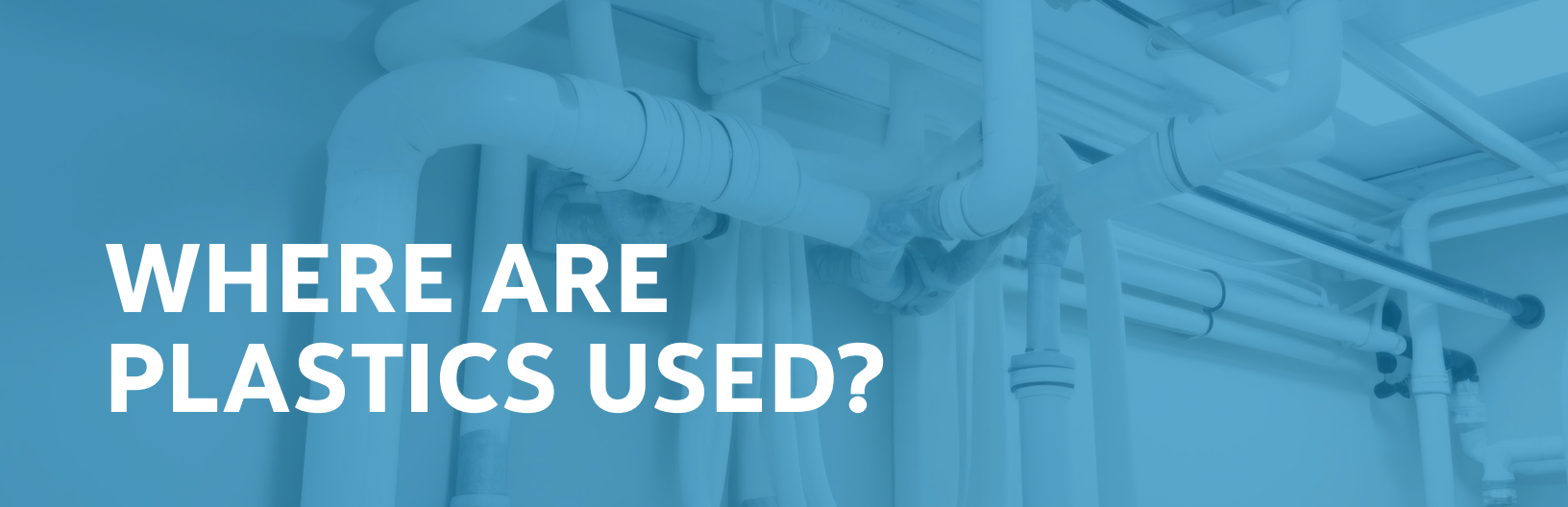
PLASTIC PRODUCTS

Shipments/revenues **\$2.5 billion**
Exports **\$440 million** annually
Employment **5,863**
Wages **\$403 million**

RESINS

Shipments of **\$4.7 billion** in 2025
Exports **\$4.1 billion** annually
Employment **1,576**
Wages **\$176 million**

EPR program in place and has recognized advanced recycling as a critical pathway to keeping plastics in the economy and out of the environment.



WHERE ARE PLASTICS USED?

Housing & Construction

Plastics are widely used in modern buildings – including in insulation, plumbing pipes, window frames, and electrical systems – helping enable durable, energy-efficient homes and infrastructure.

22% of plastics used in Canada go into construction materials

1.5+ million tonnes used annually in construction products

Automotive

Chemicals and plastics are foundational to Canada's automotive manufacturing sector. Advanced polymers and chemical formulations make modern vehicles lighter, safer, more durable, and more fuel efficient—reducing weight while maintaining strength and performance. Plastics account for roughly half of a vehicle's volume but only about 10% of its weight, enabling improved fuel economy and lower emissions. Chemical innovations are also essential for coatings, adhesives, lubricants, airbags, corrosion protection, electronics, and battery systems that support both conventional and electric vehicles.

~15% of plastics used in Canada go into vehicles

1+ million tonnes used in automotive products

Natural Resources

Chemicals and plastics are essential to the success and competitiveness of Canada's mining sector, particularly in the development of critical minerals that power modern technologies and low-carbon systems. Across the mining value chain – from ore extraction and drilling fluids to flotation agents that separate valuable minerals, and high-purity chemicals used in refining metals like lithium, copper, and cobalt – chemical inputs are indispensable to efficient, safe and environmentally responsible operations. Without these specialized chemistries, critical mineral ores would remain inaccessible and inefficient to process ("they're just rocks without chemistry").

Plastics used extensively in industrial piping and infrastructure

Materials support **durability** and **corrosion resistance** in harsh environments

Food Systems & Packaging

Plastic packaging plays a critical role in ensuring Canadians have reliable access to safe, affordable, and high-quality foods. Lightweight and durable plastic materials are widely used to package fresh produce, meat, dairy, and prepared foods, helping prevent contamination and damage during transportation and storage.

Packaging is the largest use of plastics in Canada

Nearly **2 million tonnes** of plastic packaging generated annually

Packaging materials **help protect food** and extend shelf life

Defence

Chemicals and plastics are core enablers of Canada's defence industry, providing advanced materials that are essential to modern defence equipment's durability, safety, performance, and strategic effectiveness. Specialized chemicals and high-performance plastics help create lightweight composites to improve fuel efficiency, flame-retardant polymers for operational safety, and corrosion-resistant coatings that extend the life of land, naval, and aerospace systems.

81,000 jobs

\$9.6 billion to GDP

\$445 million in R&D

Healthcare

Chemicals and plastics are fundamental to Canada's innovative pharmaceutical sector, enabling the discovery, development, manufacture, and delivery of life-saving medicines and vaccines. From medicinal chemistry that designs and optimizes new drug molecules, to advanced plastic-based drug delivery systems, sterile packaging, and single-use biopharmaceutical processing equipment, these materials are essential at every stage of turning a chemical compound into an effective treatment. Without chemistry and plastics' foundational contributions, Canada's pharmaceutical capacity to respond to emerging health challenges with agility and precision would be significantly weakened.

110,000 Jobs

\$3.2 billion in R&D

\$18.4 billion in economic activity

Aerospace

Chemicals and plastics are fundamental to the success and global competitiveness of Canada's aerospace industry, providing the advanced materials that make modern aircraft, satellites, and aerospace systems lighter, stronger, safer, and more fuel-efficient.

These materials—from carbon fiber-reinforced polymers and heat-resistant plastics used in airframes and internal components, to specialty coatings, adhesives, lubricants, and de-icing fluids—are essential to the manufacture and operation of aerospace products and help maintain performance under extreme conditions.

\$34 billion to GDP

225,000 jobs

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP



RESPONSIBLE CARE®

CIAC requires all chemical member companies to implement Responsible Care, a mandatory, independently verified performance standard that drives continuous improvement in environmental protection, health, safety, and transparency across operations.



CIAC also leads Operation Clean Sweep® (OCS), a stewardship program focused on preventing the loss of plastic pellets, flakes, and powders throughout the supply chain. Through OCS, companies commit to best practices in handling, containment, and employee training to help keep plastics out of the environment.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate industry's commitment to responsible manufacturing and proactive environmental stewardship.



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