

Virginia Maclaren Biography

Virginia Maclaren holds a PhD in Regional Science from Cornell University and is a Registered Professional Planner in Ontario. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography & Planning at the University of Toronto. Dr. Maclaren's area of expertise lies broadly within the field of waste management, but she has also published on a number of other topics including environmental impact assessment and sustainability indicators.

Dr. Maclaren's current and recent research projects focus on food waste, waste diversion, and energy-from-waste. She is a collaborator with the Toronto Environmental Alliance on a research project funded by the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change that is investigating successful approaches for encouraging waste diversion in Toronto's high-rise residential buildings. She is also a co-investigator on a study of food waste that is being funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council and led by Dr. Kate Parizeau from the University of Guelph. The project is examining food waste generation across the food value chain in Ontario (i.e. producers, processors, transporters, retailers, service sectors, and households) and aims to improve theoretical understandings of the geographies of food waste, including the cultural, institutional, and human-environment relations that contextualize this issue. Working with principal investigator Dr. Jamie Baxter from Western University, she recently completed a SSHRC-funded project on attitudes towards energy-from-waste among residents of three communities in Ontario.

Dr. Maclaren has served on several provincial and municipal advisory groups related to waste management and the environment. Her appointments within the last 15 years include membership on the Board of Waste Diversion Ontario (2008-16), the Ontario Greenbelt Council (2005-10), the City of Toronto Mayor's Towering Waste Challenge Judging Committee, (2016-17), Toronto's Long Term Waste Management Strategy Stakeholder Advisory Group, (2014-16), and Toronto's Multi-Family Waste Diversion Committee (2004-2008).