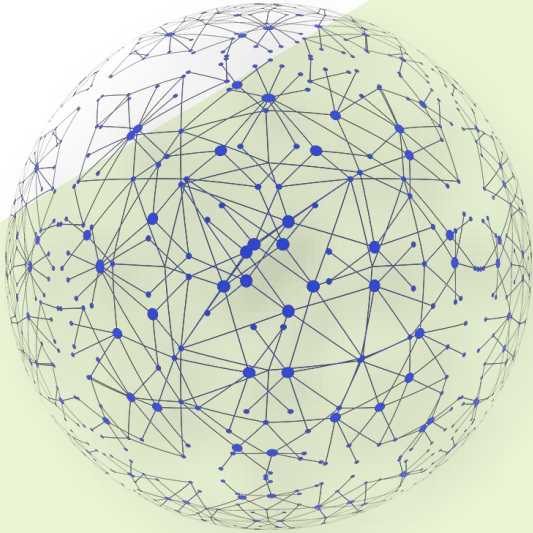


# A CIRCULAR ECONOMY INNOVATION NETWORK FOR CANADA



## Canada needs a circular economy innovation network

Advancing a circular economy for Canada represents an enormous opportunity. Achieving this, however, will require a national strategy and a 'network of networks' that can bring an ecosystem of stakeholders together to build tools and capacity to implement and accelerate circular economy solutions across businesses, industry sectors, supply chains, and communities.

Canada needs a circular economy. To achieve this, we need a national strategy with a well-coordinated and well-resourced national innovation network focused on advancing the circular economy. While pockets of circular economy innovation are happening across the country, it is proposed that we create a coordinated national ecosystem that will strategically align industry with leading research and non-profit organizations, bring forward new synergies, streamline resources, and help build further capacity to support innovation and competitiveness across all sectors and regions in Canada.

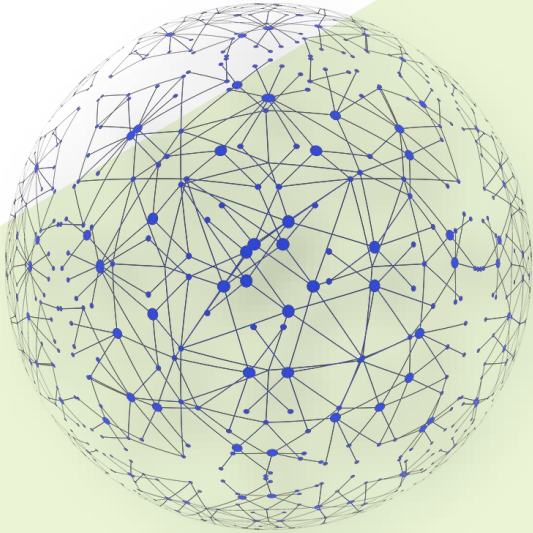
The objectives of such an innovation network are to:

- Integrate circular economy strategies into existing and new supply chains;
- Support industry and SMEs with the development of new business models;
- Enhance process innovation and improve productivity through related technology applications that result in deeper greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions and improved material and resource efficiency; and
- Create jobs and increase competitiveness across key sectors in Canada.

The shared vision for this effort is to create a circular economy 'supercluster' or 'network of networks' that would be designed to deliver an effective, coherent, and collaborative approach to advancing regionally and nationally coordinated research, innovation challenges and living labs, business accelerators, and pilot projects to foster the commercialization and scaling of market-tested circular solutions and supply chains.

This initiative would position Canada as a leader in circular economy innovation and would send a strong signal to industry, investors, and the innovation community. Programs would be developed by industry and the innovation ecosystem partners that would bring together all the essential ingredients for successfully scaling innovation. Programs would be designed to allow industry, communities, governments, and other partners to build on recent investments in innovation, including demonstration projects and research efforts, accelerators, and other collaborations, and go further by scaling knowledge sharing, advancing regional clusters and sectoral transition projects.

# WHY CIRCULAR ECONOMY?



**Who is Involved?** Creating the proposed network will require that we bring together a broad, multi-sectoral network from across Canada that includes industry, SMEs, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations. A small group of champions for such a network has already been working together to build the beginnings of such a strategy. More than 3 dozen organizations so far have provided letters of support, with core partners including:

- Circular Economy Leadership Canada
- The Natural Step Canada
- National Zero Waste Council
- Smart Prosperity Institute
- Canada Plastics Pact
- Circular Innovation Council
- Recycling Council of Alberta
- International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Ivey School of Business
- Our Food Future / COIL (Guelph-Wellington, ON)
- Council of the Great Lakes Region (Ontario)
- École de technologie supérieure / Center for Intersectoral Studies and Research on the Circular Economy (Quebec)
- Metal Tech Alley (BC)
- Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (Manitoba)

The circular economy is an emerging model that is linking new economic and employment opportunities with the potential to create more resilient communities, businesses, and supply chains, improve competitiveness, spur innovation, and attract new investment that can support economic recovery.

The circular economy is being recognized by many globally as the economic model for future sustainability and prosperity. Companies and industries globally have been looking to the circular economy model to rethink their business strategies and, as a result, value chains within industries and across sectors are shifting. As stated by the World Economic Forum, “circular business models provide a competitive edge because they create more value from each unit of resource than the traditional linear ‘take-make-dispose’ model.” From established multinational firms, to innovative start-ups and small business entrepreneurs, circular economy strategies are increasingly being integrated into practice.

Governments around the world have been investing to capture opportunities in the emerging circular economy. Europe has embraced the circular economy as a defining strategy through its updated *Circular Economy Action Plan*, with the European Commission’s *Horizon 2020 Programme* having invested nearly €1 billion into research and the financing of circular economy projects and initiatives in order to become global leaders in technology and business model innovation, improve efficiency, and enhance competitiveness. Earlier this year, China released its newest five-year plan (2021-2025) outlining goals for the adoption of a circular economy system.

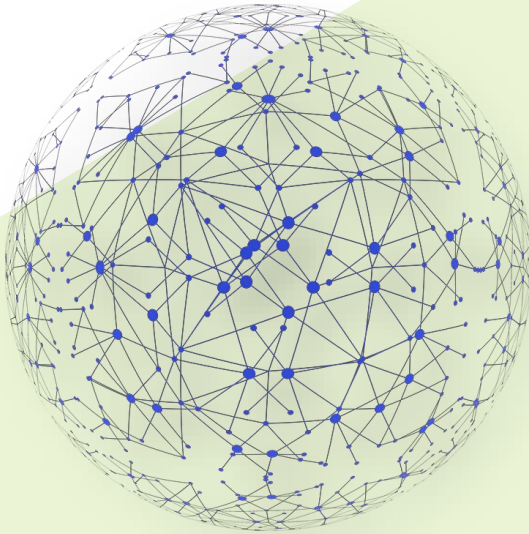
For Canada, the circular economy provides a strategy to ensure long-term industry competitiveness, providing a bridge between environmental and economic priorities and presenting practical business solutions. This major shift presents both domestic resiliency and economic recovery potential, as well as new export opportunities for firms offering circular products, services, and resources in line with growing global demand. Targeted investments in innovation, including 4IR technologies, supply chain, and business model innovation can lead to economic development opportunities here in Canada with a wide range of community benefits, as well as global export potential.

# WHY NOW?

Applying a cross-sector, system-wide approach, the circular economy addresses current resource challenges and the climate crisis by enabling deeper GHG emission reductions while simultaneously creating jobs and investments for communities across the country. Despite the disruptions of the pandemic (or maybe because of it) there has been a significant increase in the volume and pace of activity underway to advance a circular economy in Canada and globally, particularly linked to economic recovery and job creation potential, as well as its potential to deliver on climate change and biodiversity goals.

Proposal partners acknowledge that taking this from concept to execution is going to require considerable effort and investment, but *if not now - then when? If not us - then who?*

This is a unique moment in time where need and opportunity converge through an initiative such as the one being proposed. It also presents a legacy platform for Canada coming out of hosting the *World Circular Economy Forum* in September 2021.



## MORE INFORMATION?

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