

SESSION SUMMARY

CANADIAN
CIRCULAR ECONOMY
SUMMIT 2023

Government-to-Government Roundtable:

Advancing Collaboration on the Circular
Economy in Canada

TORONTO, ON | 19-20 JUNE, 2023



Background & Objectives

The use of natural resources has more than tripled from 1970 and continues to grow¹. Based on current trends, global material resource demand could double by 2050, likely outpacing the supply of constrained natural resources (e.g., water, arable land, biomass, critical minerals and metals, etc.) while generating significant negative environmental impacts (including greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation). The circular economy model presents solutions for addressing these issues, while creating new economic and social benefits and opportunities in terms of investments, jobs, innovation, and community resiliency.

At present, Canada is the only G7 country without a national strategy or program for advancing the circular economy. While Canada has shown international leadership on plastics, a national approach to the broader circular economy has not yet been developed. There is a growing interest and need for a common vision and coordination at the national level to maximize the related economic, social, and environmental benefits of circularity, while addressing existing barriers and potential risks that are unique for Canada.

Government-to-Government Roundtable

On Day 2 of the [Canadian Circular Economy Summit](#) (June 20, 2023), [Circular Economy Leadership Canada \(CELC\)](#) in collaboration with [Circular Innovation Council \(CIC\)](#), and in partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), convened a Government-to-Government (G2G) Roundtable on “Advancing Collaboration on the Circular Economy in Canada”.

The goal of the G2G Roundtable was to engage participants from all levels of government across the country to engage in an open dialogue on the status of current circular economy efforts and to explore opportunities for future collaboration and coordination to advance circularity in Canada – including in conjunction with climate action and net zero goals.

Informed by the results of a Scoping Study ([EN / FR](#)) undertaken by CELC in the Fall of 2022, as well as a pre-event survey², the G2G Roundtable focused on the question: *What could a ‘made-in-Canada’ approach to advancing the circular economy look like?*

G2G Roundtable Objectives

The specific objectives for the G2G Roundtable were to:

- Explore approaches for improving national collaboration on the circular economy, based on evidence of successful domestic and international circular economy strategies and initiatives.
- Understand common benefits, opportunities, and challenges from across Canadian jurisdictions, to inform the expansion of circular economy efforts in Canada.

¹ International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook (2019). See: <https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/global-resources-outlook>.

² See Appendix A for findings from the pre-event survey.

G2G Roundtable Agenda

The Roundtable was facilitated by The Delphi Group. Short presentations by ECCC and CELC were delivered at the outset of the session to set the context.

Natalie Theriault, Executive Director of the Strategic Policy Branch at ECCC, provided welcoming remarks, explaining ECCC's objective to initiate G2G engagement on the circular economy in Canada and to continue exploring the federal role in a national transition to a more circular economy. Paul Shorthouse, Managing Director at CELC, presented the findings from the Scoping Study, including a high-level overview of different potential governance models for Canada's circular economy transition.

The presentations were followed by facilitated breakout group discussions, which were guided by questions around themes of "Governance Models & Coordination" and "Framework Development & Implementation". The session closed with an opportunity to share key take-aways and discuss next steps. The full agenda can be found in Appendix B.

G2G Roundtable Participation

Approximately 60 delegates participated in the G2G Roundtable, representing local, provincial, and federal levels of government from across Canada, including:

- Seven federal departments;
- Three provincial governments; and
- Over 20 local and regional governments.³

Note: The G2G Roundtable was not a formal consultation process; rather, the invite list included government officials already attending the Canadian Circular Economy Summit. This session summary will inform broader future engagement.



³ See Appendix C for a full list of government organizations that participated in the G2G Roundtable.

Key Take-aways

Several questions were posed to participants during breakout table discussions to generate ideas and dialogue on government collaboration to advance the circular economy in Canada (see Appendix B for the list of questions). Below are summaries highlighting participants' responses to each question.

Successes and Gaps

Recurring themes emerged during discussions on what is currently working (successes) and what needs improvement (gaps).

Bottom-up or grassroots community efforts and approaches are gaining traction, but greater support is required for the continued success and longevity of projects and initiatives. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) was flagged as a successful model for capacity building, particularly for smaller communities.

A lack of common vision, language, standards, key indicators, and high-quality data were identified as significant gaps and barriers to effective implementation of circular economy efforts.



In addition, a broad and general understanding of the concept of the circular economy is still lacking among government officials and requires greater socialization throughout the public service (at all levels). There was an observed need for basic education and capacity building to implement circular economy opportunities locally. The somewhat abstract concept of the circular economy presents challenges with respect to effectively communicating its opportunities and benefits.

Furthermore, the current lack of awareness and understanding among government staff also hinders the implementation of circular programs and policies, while **the systemic nature of the circular economy brings challenges with respect to establishing roles and responsibilities across each level of government.**

Sharing success stories and case studies among jurisdictions has been helpful for scaling and replicating best practices. There are a few prominent examples of circular economy in action that are helping to build awareness about the concept (e.g., international and local focus on plastics), but this understanding needs to be broadened and strengthened. The lack of a common information sharing platform was also highlighted as a gap. In addition, involving economic development agencies has helped advance local circular economy efforts given their pre-existing relationships with the business community.

Another theme was the importance of aligning circularity efforts with existing priorities, including climate action, because making Canada's economy more circular will be key to achieving climate and environmental goals. Embedding circular economy into climate plans and other existing environmental and economic frameworks could strengthen the case for the circular economy, facilitate uptake and engagement, and leverage existing support and structures, including systems for measuring success and progress. Strong momentum behind climate action is a common motivator across stakeholders for pursuing circularity.

The Word Cloud below, generated during the G2G Roundtable, shows responses to the following question: **What terms / words do you use to communicate circular economy with stakeholders?**

The results demonstrate that there is no common definition for the circular economy across Canada – creating an opportunity for greater alignment of terminology.



National-Level Coordination

Participants discussed how national-level coordination could support their respective circular economy efforts. Where possible, aligning and harmonizing efforts across all levels of government (e.g., as seen with Canada's single use plastics agenda) can accelerate action and mitigate the challenges of compliance for business.

With respect to the federal government, participants identified important roles to:

- Set the tone and level of ambition;
- Provide certainty and predictability on policy direction and goals;
- Help standardize definitions and measurement approaches;
- Improve access to better data and information sharing; and
- Provide support through coordinating and de-risking activities, innovation efforts, and investments in infrastructure, industry, and communities across jurisdictions.

The development of an ‘apolitical’ framework was proposed as a potential next step, providing structure to support circular economy efforts, while still allowing for flexibility and agility to avoid stifling innovation. A framework would also encourage jurisdictions at multiple levels to use their respective levers of power to support circular economy efforts. It was noted that over prescription could undermine existing efforts and/or overwhelm resources. Care should be taken not to mandate unachievable goals or institute a ‘heavy handed’ approach.

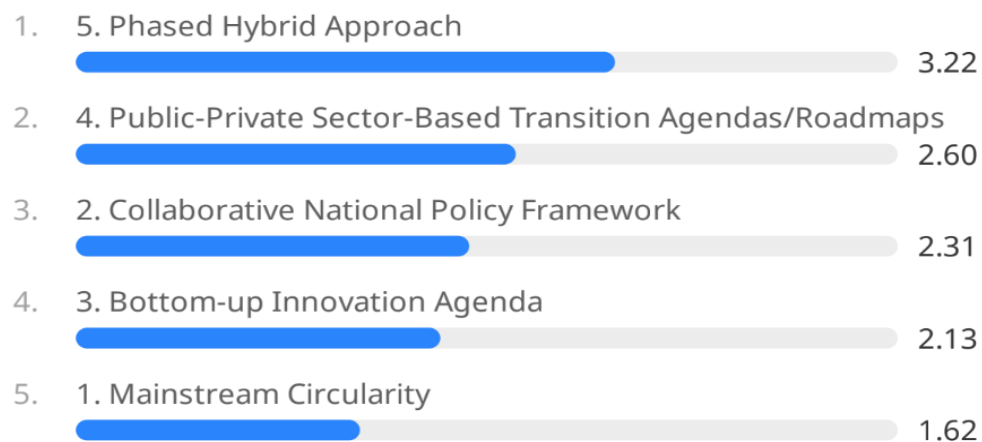
Lastly, groups discussed **ensuring a diverse set of voices are at the table in order to integrate important considerations with respect to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI), including meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples in circular economy efforts.** An inclusive approach to engagement will also be essential to developing and validating an effective framework for a national circular economy transition.



Governance Models

Participants discussed the five governance models presented in the Scoping Study (i.e., Mainstreaming Circularity, Collaborative National Policy Framework, Bottom-up Innovation Agenda, Public-Private Sector-Based Transition Agenda, and the Phased Hybrid Approach – see Appendix D). Participants also shared their perspectives on how the various governance models reflect the readiness of their organizations / jurisdictions to advance and collaborate on circular economy policy and related initiatives (see polling results below).

Participants were asked to rank the governance models in priority of which would best support their respective organizations in delivering on their circular economy goals. **Below are the results of the poll.**



In general, participants noted the **need for flexibility and adaptability within any chosen model to allow for agile adjustments over time**, given each model has its own respective benefits and flaws that may vary over time and in different contexts. It was also suggested that leveraging different models at different levels of government or across different sectors could allow for additional customization and flexibility.

There was **widespread appetite for federal ambition, as well as support for top-down policy action when developed collaboratively with other levels of government and with enough time to phase in regulatory changes gradually**. At the same time, bottom-up approaches are seen as essential starting places (and are already well underway in many jurisdictions), but awareness of opportunities and capacity to implement them are often limiting factors.

Local government representatives noted that cities want to specialize and take their own unique approach to the circular economy in terms of projects and initiatives but need financial and technical support to do so. Lastly, it was emphasized that businesses need consistency and certainty in terms of policy and regulatory approaches, as well as reliable and accessible infrastructure.

Approaches to Collaboration

Participants identified several collaboration methods / platforms that would be helpful in developing a nationally coordinated approach. Emerging themes revolved around the need for **developing aligned mandates across agencies, including regular opportunities to connect across levels of government and jurisdictions** (i.e., a need for regular touchpoints and opportunities for connection and collaboration).

It was further noted that there are no formal governance tables at present for the circular economy in Canada that adequately represent the various interests and that there is a need to establish **a dedicated collaborative platform for the circular economy in Canada** that brings together all levels of government, alongside businesses, academia, NGOs, and other key stakeholders.



Participants underscored the importance of not reinventing the wheel but rather learning from others' successes and failures, continuously exchanging ideas, and seeking to create efficiencies and certainty for the business community to encourage investment and scaling up.

Regarding the role of different levels of government in developing a collaborative approach to a circular economy in Canada, **participants emphasized the need for the federal government to be an initiator and convenor to support collaboration and the development of a shared vision.**

Provincial and territorial governments can play a key role in setting targets, while municipalities will be integral to the implementation of circular solutions on the ground, as well as participating in target-setting processes.

Collectively, the federal government and provinces and territories can lead by developing supportive regulation, leveraging fiscal policies (e.g., taxation and pricing measures), developing and investing in supportive infrastructure, and driving circularity through green procurement.

Pushing for the inclusion of circular economy principles in policy as early as possible in the design and development stages is considered the most effective way to promote widespread, systematic change and the adoption of circular economy practices.

Several participants expressed interest in establishing a national framework for the circular economy to establish the common language, aligned and guide efforts, and support action.

Participants discussed the potential of a government-supported platform to share success stories and promote initiatives as a way to exchange information and best practices – including reporting out on milestones in order to celebrate the successes and demonstrate progress over time. **The need for public-private partnerships was also flagged as crucial to driving the circular economy.**

Next Steps & Actions

The G2G Roundtable helped to establish deeper relationships among government officials across Canada and set in motion greater awareness for how governments might look to collaborate on advancing a national approach to the circular economy in line with various economic, social, and environmental priorities.

During the G2G Roundtable, input from participants revealed priority action areas for advancing collaboration on the circular economy in the immediate-term, near-term (i.e., two years out), and medium-term (i.e., five years out).

In terms of **immediate priorities**, the actions revolved around education, collaboration, and capacity building. It was suggested that immediate action and priorities should target streamlining approaches, developing collaborative structures, and concentrating efforts. This includes the need for engagement with the public and industries to collect existing best practices, as well as for greater awareness building and knowledge sharing within government through sharing case studies and storytelling. Collaboration platforms and channels that bring together governments horizontally, as well as vertically, are one tool to address this. Federal and provincial and territorial governments could consider developing circularity-focused funding streams and strategies to support and scale projects and initiatives, including capacity-building.

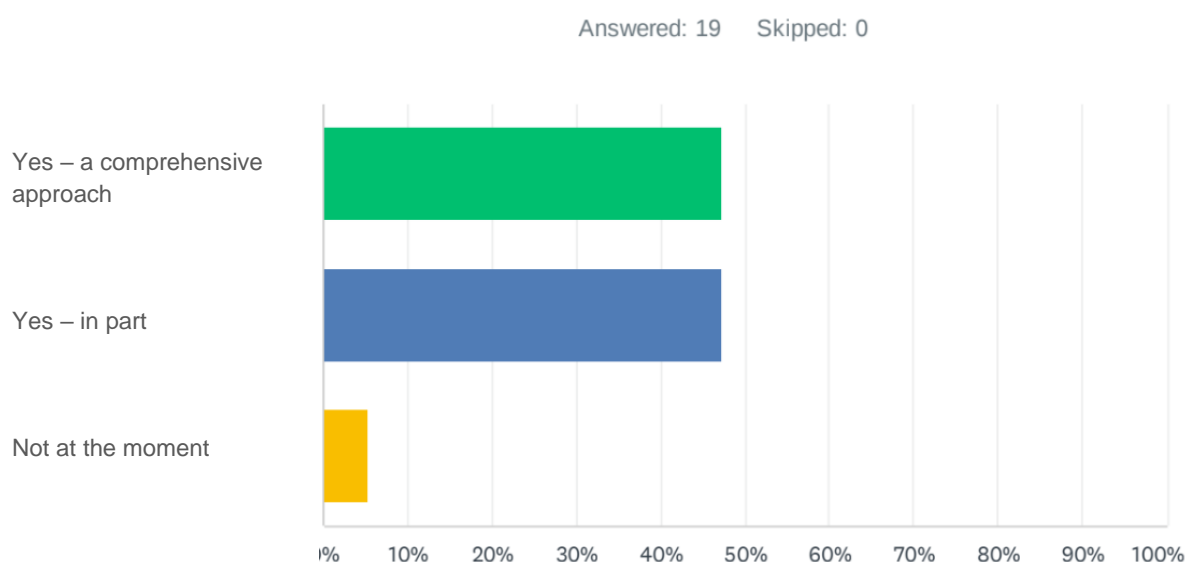
With respect to **near-term actions** (i.e., two-year time horizon), participants noted that efforts should shift toward the development of more concrete plans and policy frameworks. There was general consensus around the need for all levels of government to collaborate on a vision and high-level targets in the form of a national framework / roadmap, along with policy / regulatory measures, as well as financial incentives. Standardized metrics, measurement frameworks, and monitoring efforts, supported by good data, should be advanced in line with policy development and incentives designed to encourage action in sectors and areas where the highest environmental impacts exist. Funding for collaborative pilots between municipalities, businesses, and social organizations was identified as a near-term priority, as well as funding for infrastructure co-development between governments and industry. In addition, public consultations should be undertaken to inform the development of a potential roadmap or national strategy.

Over the **medium-term** (i.e., five-year time horizon), objectives include the establishment of a hybrid model for deliberate collaboration, innovation, and capacity building, as well as increased regulation to drive circular economy solutions (similar to what is currently happening to support action on climate and net zero goals).

Appendix A: Pre-Event Survey Results

A pre-event survey was sent to participants to get a better understanding of the current level of circular economy related activity, policy leadership, and initiatives at various government levels and jurisdictions across Canada. Responses were received from approximately 20 officials from all levels of government across Canada who were invited to the Government-to-Government Roundtable. Results from the survey are summarized below.

Q1: Is your jurisdiction currently looking to advance the circular economy (CE) in your region through government-led policy?



Q2: Which departments are leading the efforts?

Results:

- **Primary:** Environment (Solid Waste / Waste Management, Climate Change) & Economic Development
- **Secondary:** Sustainability, Engineering, Other (e.g., agriculture)

Q3: What is the primary rationale for advancing your CE policies?

Results:

- Waste reduction, climate change mitigation, economic development, and resiliency (e.g., jobs, new revenues)

Q4: What are your sectors or materials of interest/focus areas?

Results:

- **Primary:** Food and agriculture, built environment, textiles, procurement, plastics, waste
- **Secondary:** Energy, mobility, natural capital regeneration, water

Q5: What are the top factors influencing support for and/or the uptake of CE efforts in your jurisdiction?

- Existing policies, strategies, and targets (e.g., zero waste, climate)
- Collaboration opportunities
- Public engagement / education
- Extreme weather issues and restoring local ecosystems
- Resource constraints (e.g., landfill capacity issues)
- Available funding
- New revenue creation

Q6: What are the top things we need to achieve a coordinated, national CE in Canada?

- Strong vision, strategic framework, and ambitious roadmap / action plan
- Incentivize and mandate specific actions to address sectors and materials with highest environmental impacts
- More awareness building (e.g., through case studies, success stories)
- Ability to increase participation / collaboration with business and citizens
- Metrics, measurement, and monitoring supported by good data
- Harmonized policies across jurisdictions

Appendix B: Government-to-Government Roundtable Agenda

Time (Eastern)	Agenda Item
12:30-12:53 pm 23 mins	Delegates Arrive / Complimentary Lunch is Served Participants are invited to settle in, introduce themselves at each table, and enjoy the buffet lunch courtesy of Summit organizers during the first 25 minutes.
12:53-1:05 pm 12 mins	Welcome & Introductions: Setting the stage for a productive and collaborative meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melissa Harris, The Delphi Group • Natalie Theriault, ECCC
1:05-1:25 pm 20 mins	Context-setting Presentation: Overview of the Circular Economy Scoping Study and Key Take-aways from Pre-Event Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Shorthouse, Circular Economy Leadership Canada • Q&A
1:25-2:15 pm 50 mins	Breakout Table Discussions Guiding Questions: <u>Governance Models & Coordination:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is working well already in your jurisdiction and where are there important gaps to be addressed? 2. How could national-level coordination support CE efforts in your jurisdiction? What would success look like? Are there any risks / concerns that should be considered? 3. Which of the 5 governance models best reflect the readiness of your jurisdiction to advance and collaborate on circular economy policy and related initiatives? Why? <u>Framework Development & Implementation:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. What collaboration methods / platform(s) would be helpful in developing a framework? 5. What should be the role of each level of government (federal, P/T, local, other) in a collaborative approach to a CE in Canada? What is the role of the private sector? NGOs?
2:20-2:25 pm 10 mins	Report Out & Next Steps
2:25 pm	Roundtable Adjourned

Appendix C: Participating Organizations

Agriculture & Agri-food Canada	Government of Québec - Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)	
City of Belleville	Guelph-Wellington Smart Cities Office
City of Calgary	Halton Region
City of Guelph	Innovation, Science & Economic Development (ISED)
City of Mississauga	Local Government District of Pinawa
City of Richmond	Metro Vancouver
City of Sherbrooke	Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)
City of Toronto	Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development
City of Vancouver	Region of Peel
County of Wellington	Regional Municipality of York
District of Squamish	Sherbrooke Innopole
Environment & Climate Change Canada (ECCC)	Standards Council of Canada
Federation of Canadian Municipalities	Vancouver Economic Commission
Global Affairs Canada	Ville de Montréal
Government of British Columbia - Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy	RECYC-QUÉBEC
Government of Ontario - Ministry of the Environment, Conservation & Parks	

Appendix D: Summary of Governance Model Options from Scoping Study

	Model 1: Mainstreaming Circularity	Model 2: Collaborative National Policy Framework	Model 3: Bottom-up Innovation Agenda	Model 4: Public-Private Sector-Based Transition Agenda	Model 5: Phased Hybrid Approach
Description	No stand-alone CE strategy is developed at the federal level. However, CE approaches are integrated into existing federal tools, policies, and strategies in a larger way than presently, where they support existing policy goals.	Federal, provincial, and territorial governments, with input from major local government partners, collaboratively set a national vision and ambition for the CE, which is then implemented and interpreted within each jurisdiction's powers, with joint efforts to harmonize wherever possible.	The federal government establishes a high-level framework that brings guidance for the CE and enables innovation sourced from various clusters and/or place-based activities (e.g., community-based projects and initiatives).	Federally-supported, industry-led collaborative tables, including a F/P/T, as well as industry, academia, NGO, local / regional government, and civil society perspectives, develop sector or material CE 'strategies' and/or 'roadmaps'.	A longer-term, staged approach which phases the bottom up innovation agenda (model 3) and the public-private sector-based transition (model 4) to gradually build the common understanding, knowledge, experience, and capacity to advance a national CE approach along a deliberate learning pathway.
Implementation Considerations	CE is largely outside frames of reference of existing strategy / policy stakeholders. As such, the integration into existing strategies and policy frameworks could be slow and cumbersome.	CE vision / ambition is primarily set by governments, limiting potential input and influence from other stakeholders. Time may be long to get on the F/P/T agenda amid other priorities, with action on CE being delayed until after agreements are reached.	Engages with already motivated stakeholders, while leaning on third-parties to drive the implementation agenda. Efforts can be advanced in a flexible, timely, and ever-evolving manner.	Opportunities to advance CE efforts vary widely by sector or material. As such, timelines to initiation will vary from short to medium based on their level of maturity.	Engages with already motivated stakeholders, and leans on third-parties to drive initial implementation agenda. As such, it provides a short timeline to initiation, but a longer timeline to broad scale implementation via tables.
Overall Impact	Defined by mandate of existing strategies / policy frameworks, which may be narrower than full CE potential.	Potential for high impact if full F/P/T alignment on agenda, but potential for limited impact if critical mass of jurisdictions are not on board.	Potential for high impact on innovation, regional job creation, and environmental benefits but (dependent on foci) success and replicability of initiatives may be limited and disparate with duplication of efforts unless accompanied by a high-level of coordination and knowledge sharing.	Potential for high impact on innovation, regional job creation, GHG, and other environmental benefits, but dependent on influence and follow through on sector-specific priorities.	Potential for high impact on innovation, regional job creation, GHG, and other environmental benefits as it brings together local / regional priorities with strategic sectors / materials of interest.