



The Circular Economy and Extended Producer Responsibility

The circular economy and extended producer responsibility (EPR) will be discussed with residents and stakeholders as the City develops its new Solid Waste Master Plan. The information in this document provides an overview of the circular economy and EPR, and how they are applied globally and in Canada. These two topics will play a major role in waste management in Ottawa. Residents and key stakeholders will be able to provide feedback on how the circular economy and EPR should be included in the City’s new Solid Waste Master Plan.

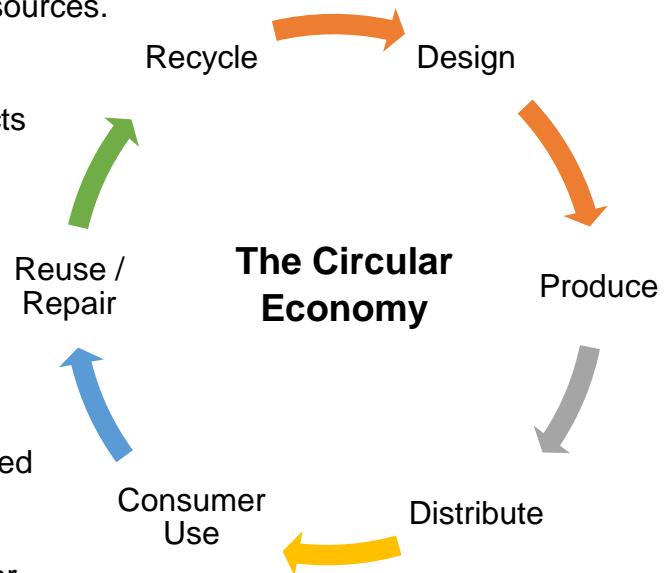
Introduction

Canada, like many countries around the world, has embraced a “take – make – dispose” economy that promotes mass production and consumption of products and packaging. Even with reuse and recycling programs in place, materials continue to be thrown in the landfill. This means that new materials need to be taken from the environment to create new products instead of recovering and reusing existing end-of-life resources.

The concept of a circular economy is being adopted worldwide to reduce the environmental impact of products and packaging without compromising an economy’s financial success.

Circular economy is a model that examines the entire lifecycle of a product with the goal of reducing waste and pollution. A circular economy aims to minimize the use of raw materials, maximize the life of materials through resource recovery, and minimize waste generated at the end-of-life of products and packaging.

One way that governments are moving towards a circular economy is by introducing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). EPR is a model that





makes companies designing products and packaging responsible for the end-of-life management of materials. Producers can influence change by designing products and packaging more sustainably so materials can be reused, recycled, or reintegrated into the design of new products.

Circular Economy and EPR Around the World

Circular economy and EPR is being adopted around the world; particularly in Europe.

In December 2015, the European Commission presented its [Circular Economy Action Plan](#). The Plan includes 54 actions that have been implemented and intend to “close the loop” on product lifecycles. The focus of the Plan includes promoting the design of more durable and recyclable products, setting new waste diversion targets and reducing food waste.

In the European Union, EPR is mandatory for batteries and electronics. Some countries in Europe have their own mandatory or voluntary EPR programs for items such as medicines, plastic bags, and lightbulbs.

There are many countries in Europe that have taken a leadership role in moving towards a circular economy, including:

- *Netherlands*: Set firm targets to achieve a full circular economy by 2050 and to reduce natural resource consumption in its economy by 50 per cent by 2030.
- *Scotland*: Identified three priority areas to support a Circular Economy: reducing carbon emissions in the food and drink sector; encouraging the remanufacturing of goods; and reducing construction waste.
- *Germany*: Launched the Innovative Product Cycles initiative, offering grants to projects designing products with Zero Waste and encouraging repairs and updates to promote the Circular Economy.



Circular Economy and EPR in Canada

Canada is moving toward a circular economy for plastics. At the federal level, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment approved its [Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste](#) in 2018. The Strategy contains ten priority “result areas” to support a circular economy, including that all plastic products are designed for greater durability, reuse and recycling.

The Province of Ontario released its [Strategy for a Waste Free Ontario – Building the Circular Economy](#) under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 (RRCEA)*. The strategy sets out requirements to achieve a circular economy and incorporates two main goals: 1) to achieve zero waste, and 2) to achieve zero GHG emissions from the waste sector. Zero waste is a visionary goal, applied by many jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, that provides guiding principles in order to work towards the elimination of waste. The visionary goal of eliminating greenhouse gases from the waste sector will help the Province reach its climate change goals and help protect the province’s natural environment.

The RRCEA also provides a framework for EPR in Ontario. The goal of EPR programs in Ontario is to make producers responsible for managing the products through their whole life cycle, from selection of materials to designing their end-of-life disposal. Since industry becomes responsible for the life cycle of the products, there's a financial incentive for them to create better designed products that will have less environmental impact and reduce the amount sent to landfill. Ultimately, under EPR, the producers pay for all the costs of producing, collecting and recycling/disposing of what they produce, hence the motivation to produce less and make products that are more easily reused and recycled. In Ontario, tires moved to EPR in January 2019 and it is anticipated that single-use batteries will move in July 2020, electronics in January 2021, household hazardous waste in July 2021, and blue box recyclables between 2023 – 2025.

Ontario is not the only Province to adopt EPR: British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec have EPR programs in place.



How the Circular Economy and EPR is relevant to the Solid Waste Master Plan

Municipal governments are responsible for managing the collection, recycling, composting and disposal of household waste in accordance with provincial and federal policies and regulations. The City of Ottawa must ensure existing and future waste management programs align with provincial regulations and policy directions on circular economy and EPR. Through the Waste Plan, the City may explore policies, programs, and initiatives that promote the circular economy, such as reducing the use of raw materials, maximizing the life of existing resources and minimizing waste generated.

Ottawa currently offers city-wide programs for the disposal of single-use batteries, electronics, household hazardous waste and blue box materials. The Solid Waste Master Plan will need to consider changes to the management of these programs, as the Province moves to an EPR model, when recommending an overall framework, direction and goals for solid waste management, diversion, and reduction policies.