



Investigating Barriers, Drivers, and Opportunities that Influence Diversion of Organic Waste in Canada's ICI Sector

Research Findings & Pathways Forward

Prepared for Environment and Climate Change Canada
September 24, 2025

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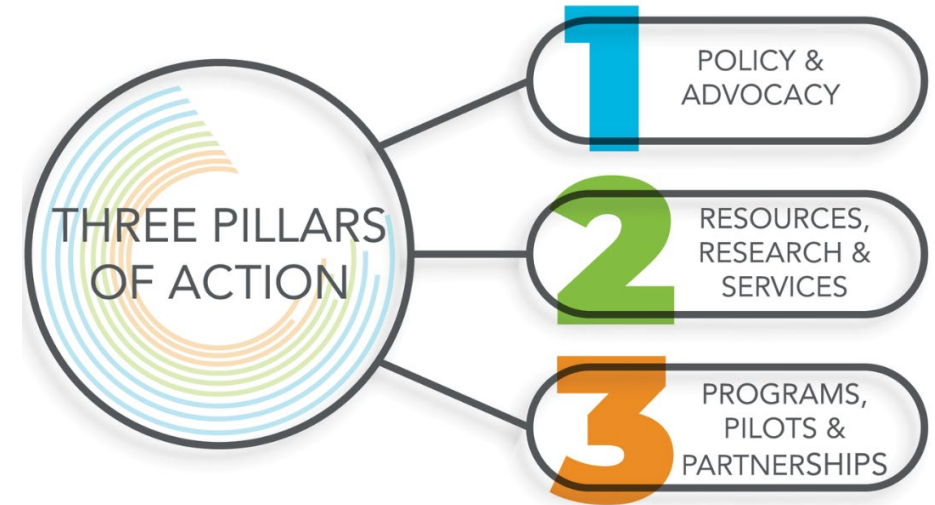
Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and thank the more than 630 First Nations, their people, and ancestors who are the traditional stewards of this land, now called Canada, in which we now share and gather here today. We acknowledge the historical oppression of lands, peoples, and cultures of this country and know we have a role to play in challenging the legacies of colonization.

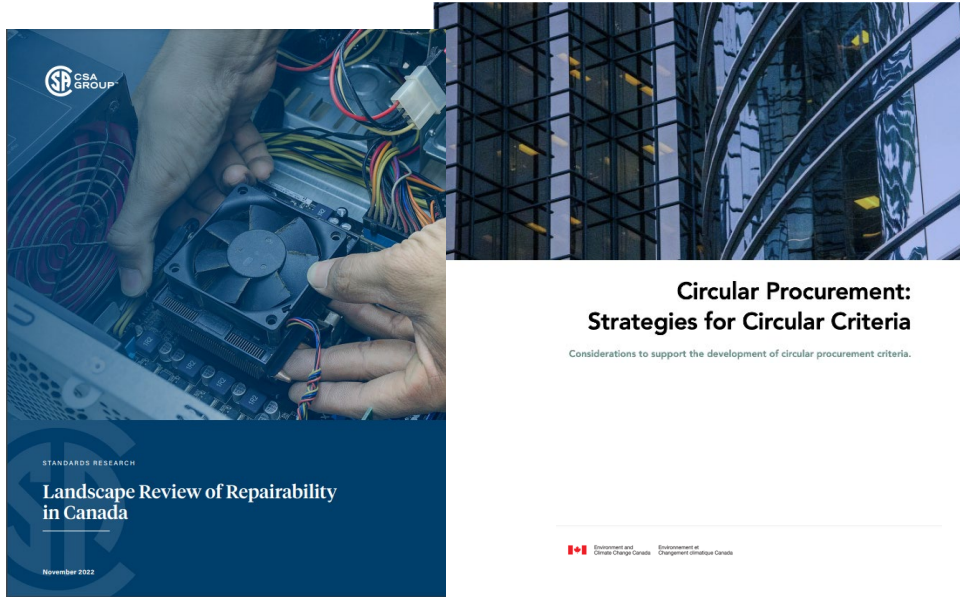
Circular economy principles are not new. The idea of sustainable resource systems, proper land stewardship, and respect for both human and environment ecosystems is not an innovative new concept. It has always been core to Indigenous teachings.

ABOUT CIC

- Established as Recycling Council of Ontario in 1978
- Reimagined in 2020 as **Circular Innovation Council** with a broader mandate
- **Vision** To be recognized as a global ambassador for the circular economy in Canada
- **Mission:** To put circular economy concepts into action
- Established and expanding membership reflecting a wide diversity of sectors and stakeholders

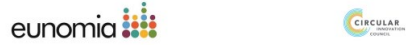


POLICY & ADVOCACY



Circular Procurement: Strategies for Circular Criteria
Considerations to support the development of circular procurement criteria.

CSA GROUP
STANDARDS RESEARCH
Landscape Review of Repairability in Canada
November 2022



A Comparative Assessment of Standards and Certification Schemes for Verifying Recycled Content in Plastic Products

Eunomia Research & Consulting with support from Circular Innovation Council

October 19, 2021



Consultation paper: a proposed federal plastics registry for producers of plastic products



RESOURCES & SERVICES

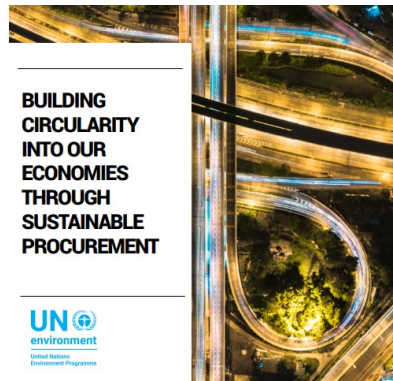


REGISTER NOW
Making the circular economy the standard:
How standards can help further circularity in the built environment, plastics, agriculture and agri-food
WEBINAR | January 30, 2024 | 1:00 - 2:00 PM (ET)

CSA GROUP
CIRCULAR INNOVATION COUNCIL



CIRCULAR INNOVATION COUNCIL
Driving the Circular Economy Through Public Procurement
CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN ACTION KNOWLEDGE SERIES



BUILDING CIRCULARITY INTO OUR ECONOMIES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

UN environment
United Nations Environment Programme

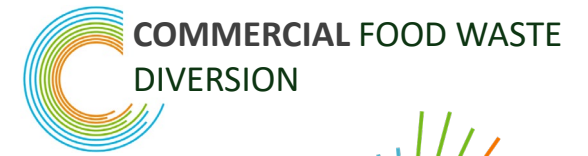
CIRCULAR CHRONICLE



CIRCULAR NEWSHUB



PROGRAMS & PILOTS



Agenda



Purpose of this research



Key findings (barriers, drivers, and opportunities)



Interpretation of Findings



Framing for the next conversation

Purpose

The Purpose of this work is **to generate information and knowledge** to further **support ongoing efforts by the Government of Canada to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** from Canada's waste sector.

Specifically, this work will establish a **better understanding of current perspectives on factors** that can **influence diversion of organic waste** in Canadian industrial, commercial and institutional **(ICI) sectors**.



Objective

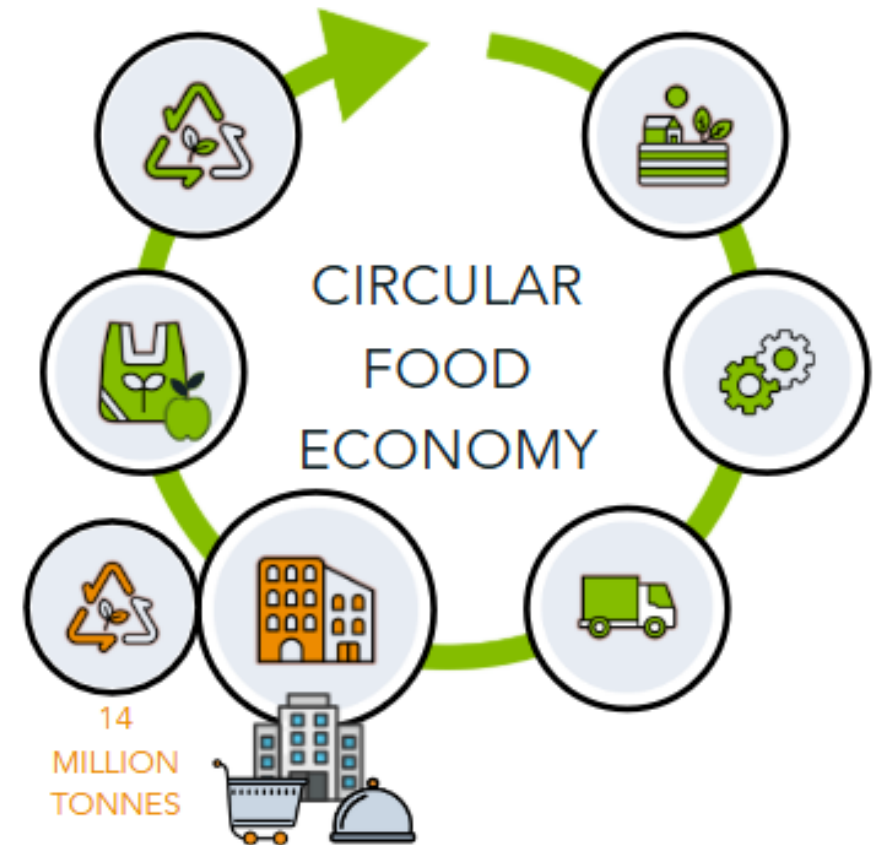
The Objective of this work is to develop a report that includes **detailed information, knowledge, perspectives and recommendations** on **opportunities, barriers and drivers** that can **influence diversion of organic waste in Canadian ICI sectors**, and

Identify areas for potential federal government intervention and support. This report will **contribute to an analysis of gaps and identify potential intervention areas** to support enhanced diversion of organic waste.



The ICI Sector Challenge

- **Canada's largest generator** of food and organic waste, producing an estimated 14 million tonnes annually
- Organic waste represents **approximately 30%** of the disposal stream
- Takes up landfill capacity and **creates potent methane emissions** when landfilled (84x stronger than CO₂ over 20 years)



State of ICI Organics Diversion

- Despite limitations to landfill capacities, resource and economic loss, and GHG generation, **ICI organics diversion remains low.**
- **Most organics diversion policies and municipal services target households,** not ICI facilities.
- **ICI Diversion programs and services are private sector based and can be costly**
- **Data specific to ICI diversion is scarce,** making it difficult for governments and industry to plan policy/programs or invest effectively.
- **Chronically low ICI organic waste diversion = is a disposal and climate problem:** methane emissions, lost resources, land use pressure

Research Objectives & Methods



1. **Assess whether municipalities have sufficient authorities** to impose regulatory controls to divert ICI organic waste.
 - **METHOD: Jurisdictional scan** of organic waste regulations at municipal and provincial/territorial levels
2. **Identify municipal and ICI perspectives** on opportunities, barriers, and drivers for ICI organics diversion (What We Heard).
 - **METHOD: 14 municipal interviews & 8 ICI sector interviews** across varying regions and sectors
3. **Identify related observations** and lessons learned from CIC IC&I organic waste pilots.
 - **METHOD: Review existing key studies & Field learnings** from 3 CIC-operated ICI organics

Who We Engaged: diversion pilots

- **Municipalities** of varying size, geography, and regulatory environments (with/without ICI waste diversion regulations/landfill bans)
- **ICI generators** across food service, retail, health care, post-secondary, and manufacturing
- **Industry associations** representing food-generating sectors
- **Diverse geographic coverage:** Western, Central, Eastern, Northern Canada

Key findings



Barriers, drivers, and opportunities

Key findings

Progress has been uneven across regions, reflecting the complexity of coordinating diverse stakeholder efforts and reinforcing the need for stronger governance and policy alignment to accelerate collective action.

- **Municipalities face barriers to action**, awaiting clearer provincial waste and climate guidance and regional infrastructure readiness
- **Provinces vary in target-setting and frameworks**, often constrained by limited alignment across jurisdictions
- **ICI sector action constrained** by lack of mandate and limited economic feasibility for voluntary action
- **Haulers/processors delay investment** without feedstock volume certainty and stable regional market signals

Key findings – Jurisdictional Scan

Canada's regulatory environment for ICI organic waste diversion is **highly fragmented across regions and government levels**, with **no coordinated frameworks** at the provincial or municipal level.



Authority & Policy Scope

- Municipalities can introduce ICI organic waste-related by-laws independently
- But provincial/territorial laws influence their scope/motivation, resulting in inconsistent and infrequent policy application.



Infrastructure & Service Models

- Access to processing infrastructure and service availability varies widely.
- Few municipalities offer dedicated collection services; most generators have to seek services on a per site basis through the private sector.



Cost Structures & Incentives

- Very few municipalities offer ICI diversion services or financial incentives.
- Some regions disincentivize landfilling through organics bans.
- Two provinces enacted landfill levies to disincentivize landfilling and recover costs to fund organics programs.

Key findings – Jurisdictional Scan



Oversight & Compliance

- Some municipalities require on-site audits of generators bins or waste management plans
- Limited municipal resources reduce capacity for effective enforcement



Education & Capacity-Building

- For regulated regions, staff training, sorting signage, and education mandates vary by region



Coordination & Partnerships

- Extent to which municipalities can incorporate public-private partnerships, intermunicipal coordination, and shared infrastructure to manage waste varies across jurisdictions

Result: Localized performance varies widely and systemic alignment is missing.

Leads to fragmented participation and uneven ICI organics diversion outcomes/performance across Canada.

Where organics diversion is expensive, uncoordinated, and not regulated, **generators often default to landfilling.**

Key findings – What We Heard

Municipal and ICI interviewees shared similar barriers, drivers, and opportunities despite playing different roles in the system.

Core “levers” to impacting organics diversion in Canada’s ICI sector:

- 1. Regulatory alignment and policy support**
- 2. Infrastructure investments**
- 3. Financial incentives and cost reductions**
- 4. Data collection and transparency**
- 5. Education and capacity building**
- 6. Collaboration and engagement**

1. Regulatory Alignment & Policy Support

Barriers

- Inconsistent regulations and definitions across jurisdictions
- Lack of enforcement makes existing policies largely ineffective
- Lack of provincial mandate or adequate processing capacity stalls municipal action

Drivers

- Provincial diversion targets enable municipal regulation and spur private sector investment
- Local mandates reduce landfill pressure

Opportunities

- Align policy across government levels with ICI realities; definitions, standards, targets
- Link ICI organics diversion to climate strategy



2. Infrastructure Investment

Barriers

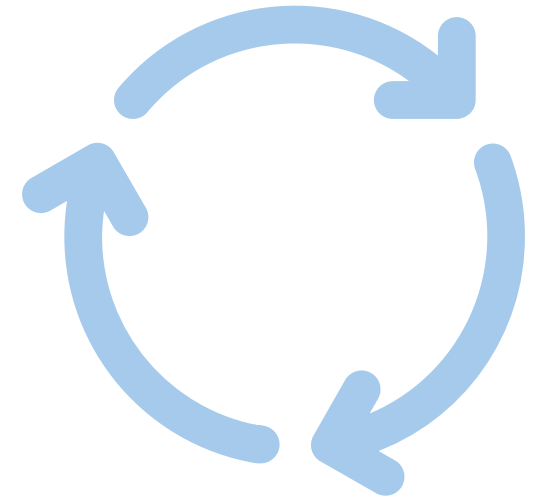
- Insufficient processing capacity, especially in rural and northern regions
- High capital and permitting costs deter development
- Long distances increase hauling costs

Drivers

- Municipal ability (and perception) to able to implement policy and programs increases when infrastructure is nearby

Opportunities

- Invest in regional composting/AD facilities/circular end-management, facilitate cooperation between municipalities
- Develop mobile or modular solutions for generators
- Support public-private partnerships and shared infrastructure use



3. Financial Incentives & Cost Reductions

Barriers

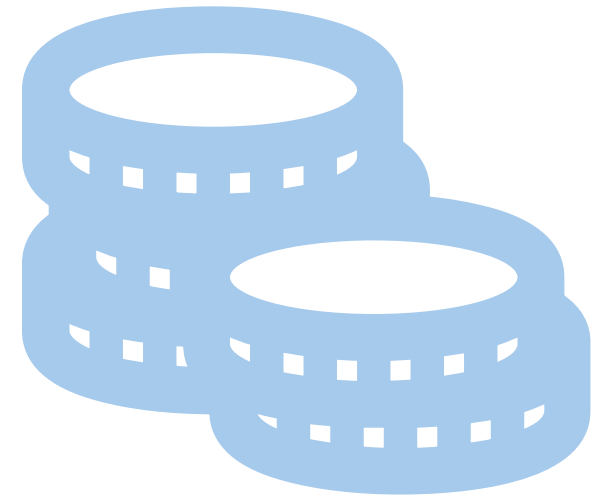
- Organics collection often costs 50-100% more than disposal
- SMEs priced out of system - lack financial resources or scale to implement diversion

Drivers

- Shared regional collection services lowers cost through efficiency and economies of scale
- Grants/subsidies reduce barriers to participation for SMEs

Opportunities

- Pilot regional cost-sharing collection models or 'early-adopters' rebate programs to precede regulations
- Offer long-term regional contracts to attract private haulers/investors



4. Data Collection & Transparency

Barriers

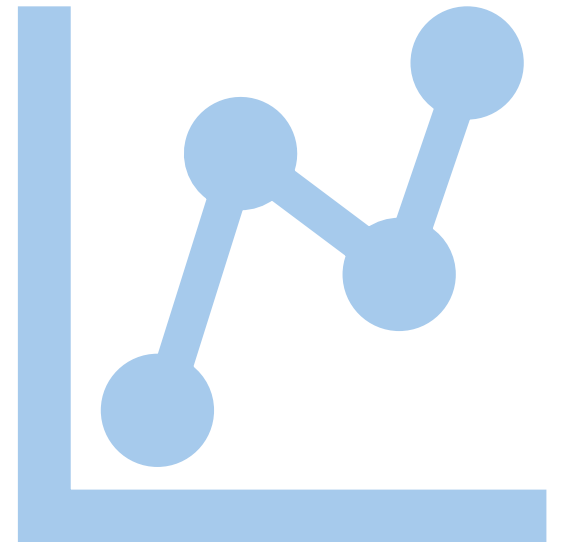
- No mechanism to compel reporting at the point of generation
- Lack of consistent data tracking or reporting for ICI organics
- Haulers rarely share diversion or contamination data
- Aggregated data and inconsistent tracking methods creates incomplete data sets

Drivers

- Businesses and municipalities are seeking waste diversion and climate performance metrics
- Data supports more informed policy and investment decisions

Opportunities

- Mandated regional hauler/business diversion reporting
- Investing in accessible tracking platforms, tools, smart tech, and shared data platforms for ICI and industry



5. Education & Capacity Building

Barriers

- Many ICI facilities unaware of best practices for implementing programs/meeting regulatory requirements
- High staff turnover in food service sector reduces effectiveness
- Contamination often due to lack of signage or staff training

Drivers

- Education increases participation and improves source separation
- Clear signage and staff engagement build workplace culture

Opportunities

- Provide multilingual, sector-specific toolkits and training
- Mandate staff and public education as part of diversion programs



6. Collaboration & Engagement

Barriers

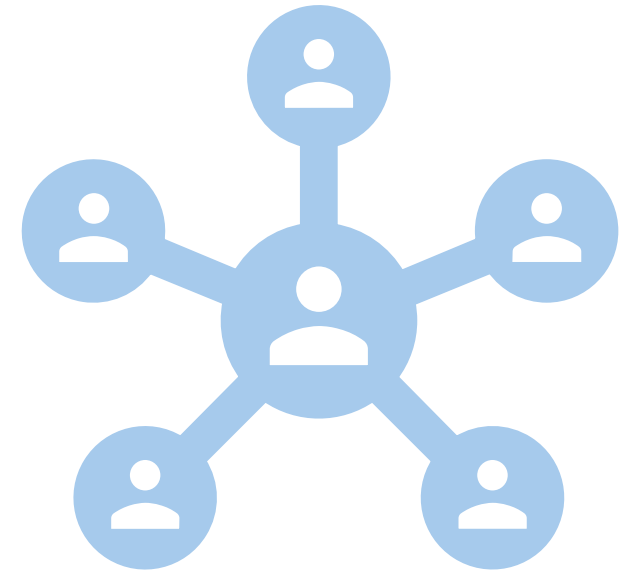
- ICI generators, haulers, and municipalities often operate in silos
- Limited coordination reduces system efficiency

Drivers

- Cross-sector engagement critical - strengthens design and uptake
- Multi-stakeholder pilots build trust and participation – gov't, ICI, service providers

Opportunities

- Facilitate co-design processes and public-private regional partnerships for shared infrastructure
- Create municipal working groups and communities of practice to align strategies and share data
- Investments in multi-stakeholder pilot projects for testing scalable ICI organic waste management solutions



Insights from CIC Pilots

ICI Organics Diversion Pilots in Ontario and Alberta - Leveraged regional economies of scale to group businesses together on shared collection routes and services.

- **Improved regional participation** - most ICI participants had never diverted organics before
- **Shared collection routes and services** improved affordability and SME access to diversion
- **Advisory support** was critical for ICI setup, compliance, and diversion performance
- **Tracking participant diversion data** enabled performance monitoring and GHG impact reporting
- **Pilots implemented pre-regulation** helped local governments prepare for mandates

Insight: Even with subsidies and support, voluntary ICI participation stayed low without regional regulation acting as top-down incentive to divert.

Comparison of Research Findings to Other Work

Patterns Are Clear, But Challenges Remain

- **Two major national government studies** (CCME 2018, ECCC 2021) have also **identified consistent systemic barriers** - including challenges with policy coordination, infrastructure unavailability, cost, unclear governance roles, siloed decision-making, and data inaccessibility.
- **These challenges are not new:** they have been acknowledged in the sector for 5–8 years, with progress continuing to be incremental.
- Consistency between our research findings and past national studies **signals a strategic moment for governments and stakeholders** to move forward together **to accelerate system change** through coordinated policy, cross-sector strategizing, and intergovernmental collaboration.

Interpretation of Findings

What have we learned?

Interpretation of Findings



System-wide inaction is driven by misalignment: each stakeholder waits for others to move first, stalling progress.



Voluntary efforts alone are not enough: without mandates, diversion uptake is low — even with support and incentives.



Policy must be paired with infrastructure and affordability: regulation without enabling conditions will not succeed.



Better data is essential: to benchmark progress, design policy, and attract investment.



Collaboration is a leverage point: shared solutions, planning, and infrastructure reduce costs and build trust.



Link ICI organics diversion to climate, circular economy, and food system strategies: to unlock funding, policy alignment, and public support.

Audience Q&A

Panel Discussion



Alison Abbink
Senior Policy Planner,
City of Edmonton



Willow Iorga
Coordinator of Education and
Outreach, City of Regina



Mariane Maltais-Guilbault
Senior Planning Advisor,
Ville de Montréal