

National Zero Waste Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

JUNE 20, 2022



Message from the Chair

This year, we're pleased to celebrate the 10th anniversary of National Zero Waste Council, Canada's leading voice for waste prevention and the circular economy.

Now with a membership of over 180 local governments, businesses and NGOs from across the nation, the National Zero Waste Council continues to bring together key players, spark important conversations, facilitate knowledge sharing, and contribute original research and resources necessary to advance circular solutions in Canada.

As we move forward with our work over the next three years, we'll build on our council's strengths, connections, and expertise to address priority waste and economic sectors — with due consideration to prevailing issues like climate change and supply chain disruptions — while incorporating emerging priority solutions in circular procurement, business model design, re-use, and new technologies.

We believe any local government or business serious about the environment and waste prevention certainly needs to integrate the circular economy into their climate change and sustainability strategies, and we look forward to welcoming even more Canadian organizations into this movement.

Jack Froese

Chair, National Zero Waste Council

Message from the Vice-Chair

I've been with the National Zero Waste Council since day one, and reflecting on the past decade, I'm proud of the tremendous successes we've achieved.

From the outset, we knew that cross-sector collaboration was necessary to develop solutions that would be viable in the Canadian market while also respecting our position in the global economy. As someone who works with businesses all across Canada and the US, I'm confident the strategic priorities we've landed on are the exact steps we need to take to best build on the successes of the Council.

Jim Downham

Vice-Chair, National Zero Waste Council

2022 Management Board

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Tonny Colyn	The Salvation Army Thrift Store
Vanessa Timmer	OneEarth

Overview

With its focus on waste prevention and cross-sector collaboration, the National Zero Waste Council is uniquely positioned as an agent of change in Canada. The Council's work drives innovation in the design, production, and use of goods in support of a circular economy. By taking action on the factors that drive waste generation, the Council is supporting a high quality of life, environmental sustainability, and economy prosperity while consuming fewer resources and less energy.

Ensuring the continued efficacy of the Council's work requires a steady eye not only on our mission and vision, but also on the socio-economic context within which it functions. This requires an ongoing commitment to strategic planning that sets out responsive work priorities and governance adjustments that help improve effective and efficient program delivery. This commitment helped guide the development of the Council's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

We are grateful for the opportunities to have engaged with our members, our Board, influential leaders outside our organization, and staff in the Secretariat and Metro Vancouver Solid Waste department in the development of strategic document.

The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan is intended to inform decision-making by providing guidance to the Management Board, Secretariat, Working Groups, and broader Council membership to better align work programming with the Council's vision and mission. The Strategic Plan is a living document – while it lays out long term objectives, it is intended to be fluid and responsive to the turbulent times we find ourselves in.

The first section of this document presents the foundation of the National Zero Waste Council – its vision, mission, guiding principles, and strategic directions. This helps define *why* we do the work we do. The second section provides the current global and Canadian context the Council is working in, and the approach we use to seek solutions to waste challenges in Canada. This is *how* we do our work. This document concludes with the strategic priority sectors and areas of work for our program in 2022-2025 – the *what* we will do over the next three years.

This Strategic Plan lays out changes, and the activities needed to support these changes, in both the 'how' and 'what' sections of the report.

NATIONAL ZERO WASTE COUNCIL

VISION

Canada united in the achievement of zero waste, now and for future generations.

MISSION

To act collaboratively with business, government and the community, at the national and international level, as an agent of change for waste prevention and reduction in the design, production and use of goods.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Commit to collaboratively working with business, government and community partners to develop new solutions.
2. Adopt a waste prevention and reduction framework that positions Canadian cities and businesses to compete globally in an emerging resource-constrained economy.
3. Align with global and international initiatives.
4. Stress the economic, social, and environmental benefits and costs associated with the conservation of resources
5. Consider local and global consequence and long term impacts.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Design Change

To catalyze change in the design of products and packaging to reduce material intensity and allow them to be more easily reused, recovered and recycled.

Behaviour Change

To catalyze change in behaviour among all stakeholders and sectors of society, with the goal of reducing the amount of waste entering the waste stream.

Moving Forward in 2022 - 2025

CURRENT CONTEXT

For many Canadian communities, businesses, and governments, 2022 has represented a transition year. Economic and social disruptions due to climate change impacts, and the COVID-19 pandemic continue. Momentum remains to address long-standing social inequities. Recent events in Ukraine continue to have global impacts on materials and supply chains. What this year, and 2023, will bring is still uncertain.

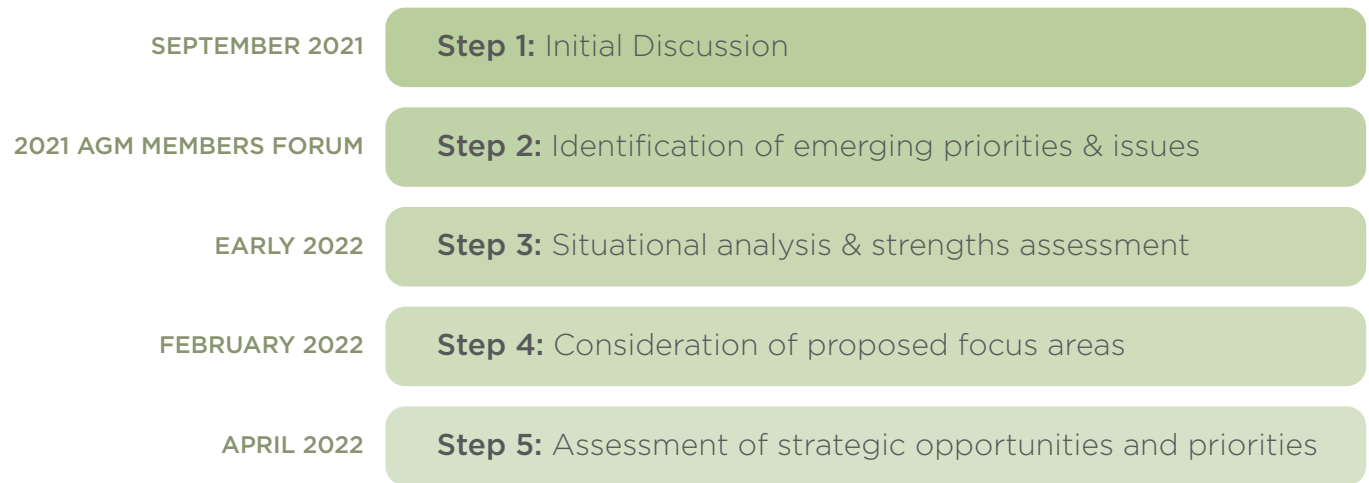
In this context, however, waste prevention is increasingly a critical issue. Circular solutions are emerging that respond not only to waste, but to the economic and social disruptions around us.

Within Canada, there is an evolution of thinking and on-the-ground practices associated with circularity, waste prevention and reduction, collaboration, and climate action. Examples include innovation support and policy changes at the federal level with respect to food waste and right-to-repair legislation; the growing influence of collaborative initiatives such as Circular Economy Leadership Canada; our own successful collaboration with others such as in the implementation of the Canada Plastics Pact; and ramped up action on climate across public, private and community domains. These activities are coalescing in ways that help us refine and target our work.

The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan uses this context to help determine how we will tackle the work of waste prevention over the next three years, the circular solutions and waste streams we will focus on, and informs how we can stay nimble enough to pivot to address new opportunities and challenges.

THE 2021-2022 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This plan took six months of consultation with a diversity of stakeholders to shape and refine. Our five-part process has been iterative, each session building on information and feedback gleaned from earlier engagement sessions.



OUR APPROACH

Our approach to conducting the work we do helps position the Council as a unique player with unique contributions in the space of waste prevention and circularity. Our approach also enables us to assess emerging opportunities and how to best leverage the enormous assets within the Council, brought to bear through our membership, management board, and collaborative relationships.

How we work

Function

The Council is known for its ability to contribute to **knowledge-building**, and **knowledge-sharing** through **the convening and curating of conversations**. Knowledge-building is done through collaboration with research organizations, or the securing of research consultants, to create new

knowledge on a discreet issue. Knowledge-sharing is conducted through various means, including workshops, webinars, summits, and involves thought-leaders, peer-to-peer learning, and cross-sector sharing of best practices. Pilot projects can straddle both knowledge-building and knowledge-sharing, as they can generate new understanding while testing, applying, and sharing new practices. Our work in 2022-2025 will continue in these realms, making sure it is considering themes of design and behavior change, as per our strategic directions.

Form

The Council has performed its work effectively and efficiently in part due to the form of Working Groups. Working groups bring rich and varied perspectives, resources, and strategic influence to the Council's work program. They include groups that have led projects as well as groups primarily

offering advice and guidance. To ensure that Working Groups continue to allow for fresh ideas, new member engagement, and facilitate a Council structure that is increasingly dynamic, Working Groups will transition over the course of 2022 into **time-specific** and **deliverable-specific** groups with new members, in part or in entirety. Details on how project development and delivery will unfold within this new working group structure will be prepared by Secretariat staff over 2022.

The new Working Group structure will not preclude any Strategic Initiative from setting up its own independent group of partners and advisors. In these cases, partners and advisors may be attached to a particular body of work, and they more provide more generalized feedback and guidance.

Strategic Initiatives will continue to be a form that serves either full program areas, with a wide range of work being undertaken under one particular banner or as a meta-level project that covers many waste streams and areas of Council interest. Food Loss and Waste, Circular Cities and Regions Initiative, and the Case for Waste Prevention research are all examples of Strategic Initiatives.

How we engage our members

We will develop a member engagement plan that articulates the mechanisms and the deliverables, within each year, to effectively engage with members. Mechanisms will include a range of webinars, working groups, workshops, and innovation showcases. A 4-point plan of action will be applied, where the Council acts as a:

- collaborator
- catalyst
- capacity-builder
- connector

This allows us to collaborate with our members on different initiatives, help connect them with others to catalyze and advance solutions, and share resources we are producing in our various programs to help build their capacity to make change. In the development of the member engagement plan, consideration will be given to a regional approach and begin with Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. There is an interest in building a youth component to our work, with greater youth representation among our members. Member recruitment, considering place-based approaches, greater demographic range, and cultural diversity, will be part of Council efforts in 2022-2025.

How we assess emerging opportunities

We will continue to assess emerging opportunities for Council involvement, using a multipronged approach to evaluate areas of focus, and how to execute for maximum impact. This approach considers emerging high priority issues/opportunities; focuses on optimizing our existing strengths, experience and expertise; and then uses the following three-point filter:

**OUR ABILITY
TO INFLUENCE**

**LINKAGE TO THE
COUNCIL'S MANDATE**

**ASSESSMENT OF THE
COLLABORATION POTENTIAL**

The work of the Council is multi-faceted and sophisticated – different waste streams require different audiences, different policy and practice changes, and different approaches to engagement and education. A fully formed ‘theory of change’ approach is required to support assessment efforts, and will be considered as part of strategic planning refinement discussions in 2023.

How we measure success

As a change agent, it is important that the Council understand where and how it has been successful in the past, including how the Council has engaged people in a change process, and where it has secured change in behavior, design, policy, or practice. This understanding can be applied to the development of annual work priorities. Recognizing that behavior and policy change can be long term endeavors, it is still pertinent to set out shorter-term markers of success.

In 2022, a small task force constituted by Board members and Secretariat staff will be struck. This task force will develop markers of success, using existing metrics and establishing new ones. These markers will be approved by the Board in 2022. They will be reported out on, and refined, annually. Once the markers have been established in 2022, the Board and staff will determine if annual Board involvement is required from 2023 to 2025 beyond annual approval of results.

2022 COMMITMENTS

Priority waste and economic sectors for 2022 include Food Loss and Waste, Construction and Demolition, Plastics and Cities.

Areas of work include:

- *Cities*: Co-lead, Circular Cities and Regions Initiative.
- *Food Loss and Waste*: Co-lead, Circular Food Systems with CELC and Our Food Future; Love Food Haste Waste Canada campaign; Government of Canada collaboration – Food Waste Innovation Challenge, and National Food Policy Advisory Council.
- *Plastics*: Chair, Source Reduction Rapid Action Group, Canada Plastics Pact.
- *Construction and Demolition*: Working group-led wood waste pilot project; Working group-led engagement on reclaimed asphalt.
- *Cross-sector*: Zero Waste Conference.

Work in these areas should incorporate attending issues such as climate impacts and supply chain disruptions, and incorporate emerging priority solution areas such as circular procurement, product/business model design, re-use, technology, and local leadership.

Opportunities to build in communication and campaign work in these areas should also be explored.

The above areas of focus do not preclude engagement with additional strategic collaboration opportunities as organizational capacity and ability to influence change dictate. Additional opportunities may present themselves through the existing collaborative work with the Canada Plastics Pact and Circular Economy Leadership Canada.

2023-2025 PRIORITIES

Future priority waste and economic sectors build on the expertise and experience that the Council has gathered, but also shift in scope and definition. We will continue to work on Food Loss and Waste, Circular Cities and Regions, and the Zero Waste Conference.

In 2023-2024, Food Loss and Waste work may subside in intensity if other waste streams surpass in opportunity or waste generation. In both cases, increasing the focus on waste prevention through a full systems change towards circularity is important. Increased attention and efforts to build out communications and campaign work on priority work plan elements are required.

Two new priority sectors and areas of work will emerge:

- **Reuse**
- **Built Environment**

Reuse

Design-thinking will continue to be infused in the work of the Council. The rapid rise of interest in reuse as a key circular and waste prevention solution dictates that we launch a body of work in this area.

A new Working Group/Task Force will lead work in this area. Scoping work to determine what elements of re-use should be prioritized for attention will take place in 2022. Right-to-repair will be included in the defining terms.

Built Environment

Construction and demolition activities in urban contexts continue to be of critical concern with respect to waste streams. There are emerging circular and waste prevention solutions that can be supported and advanced in these areas. These solutions are increasingly seen to be linked to design, climate, and social equity solutions, and are embedded in the fabric of urban living. They take a whole-systems approach to change, and are better described within the context of the Built Environment.

Beginning in 2022, the Construction and Demolition working groups will begin to amalgamate into one, under the banner of the Built Environment. Work undertaken by this one group, beginning in 2023, will increase in profile relative to the work on food loss and waste, and circular cities.

Additional Considerations

Remaining Nimble and Responsive

In 2023-2025, a commitment to allow capacity and funding to respond to emerging strategic opportunities will be considered. The assessment model described above – optimizing existing strengths, experience, and expertise, along with the three-point filter of ‘ability to influence, link to mandate, collaboration potential’ will be applied to determine if and when an opportunity should be capitalized upon.

Storytelling

In 2022, opportunities to increase communications and campaign efforts will begin to increase, with more substantial increases seen in 2023-2025. Communication strategies and a strong media plan will be prepared. The Council will develop and then tell our stories of the waste and circular problems and solutions we all face. In 2023-2025, a stronger commitment to storytelling will be evident in our projects and programs.

Staying Connected Locally and Globally

In the Council’s founding five principles, there is a commitment to remaining aligned with global initiatives. Staying connected to global leaders will continue to be a hallmark of the Council, even while our will continue to focus on the Canadian context. Finding opportunities within and beyond the National Zero Waste Council to facilitate alignment and learning from global leaders will be important over the next three years.

CONCLUSION

A strategic plan has often been described as a nexus point, where uncertainty is embraced and confidence is found in new directions forward. This Strategic Plan intends to lay out large bodies of work that thoughtfully take us into a circular, waste-free future. It also intends to offer us ways in which we can be nimble and responsive to the changes around us. This plan offers us an opportunity to review and consider each year how we move our mission forward – do we need to change what we do, how we do it, or who we work with? As the world moves toward a circular future, we hope this Strategic Plan will accelerate and scale in response to those shifts before 2025.



