CCME

Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment

Le Conseil canadien des ministres de l'environnement

# CANADA-WIDE ACTION PLAN ON ZERO PLASTIC WASTE

## Phase 1

**PN 1589**

## 1. Introduction

In November 2018, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) approved in principle the Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste. Ministers agreed that taking action to reduce plastic waste, support improved reuse and value recovery is vital to lowering the amount of plastic released in our environment.

> Nearly ninety per cent of Canada's plastic waste is not recycled or recovered. This represents an economic loss of $7.8 billion

The Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste aims to reduce the harmful environmental impacts of plastic waste through greater prevention, collection and value recovery to achieve a more circular plastics economy (Figure 1). Circular economies keep materials and products in use as long as possible by recirculating them back into the economy through recycling, refurbishing or repurposing.

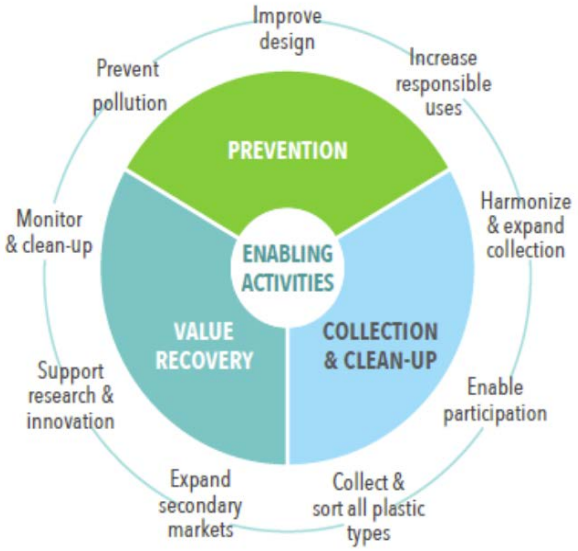


**Figure 1: Main areas of action for a circular plastics economy in Canada**

Retaining materials and products in a circular economy not only reduces effects on the environment but also has significant economic benefit. For example, it is estimated that a zero-plastic waste economy could help Canada save $500 million of annual costs, create 42,000 direct and indirect jobs, and prevent 1.82 megatonnes of $CO_2$ equivalent greenhouse gas emissions.[i]

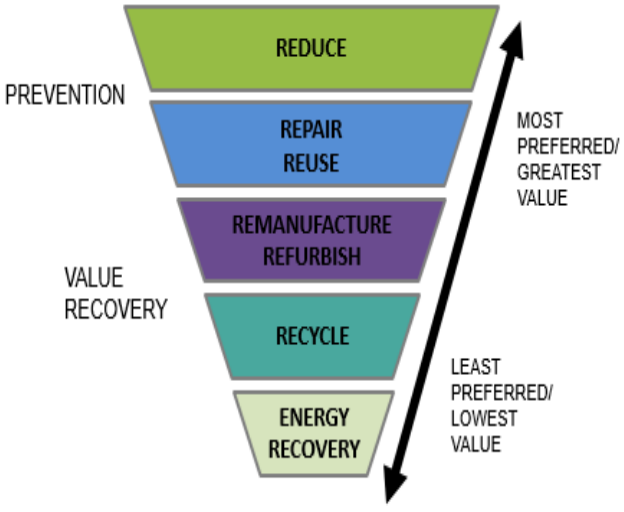


**Figure 2: Waste Management Hierarchy**

This Strategy's approach aligns with the Ocean Plastics Charter championed by Canada during its G7 Presidency in 2018 and the principles established in the waste management hierarchy (illustrated in Figure 2). The hierarchy ranks the preferred ways to reduce, repair, reuse and recycle materials according to the value each method retained in the economy.

CCME is releasing its Action Plan for the Canada-wide Strategy for Zero Plastic Waste in two phases. This first phase of the Action Plan focuses on product design, single-use plastics, collection systems, recycling capacity and domestic markets.

Phase 2 of the Action Plan will focus on preventing plastic pollution in oceans, inland lakes and waterways, advancing science to monitor the impacts of plastics pollution within the environment, consumer awareness, clean-up and taking global action. Phase 2 of the Action Plan will be released in 2020.

During its G7 Presidency in 2018, Canada championed the Ocean Plastics Charter, which contains commitments to work with industry to reach:

- 100% reusable, recyclable, or, where viable alternatives do not exist, recoverable plastics by 2030
- at least 50% recycled content in plastic products where applicable by 2030
- with other orders of government, recycling and reuse of at least 55% of plastic packaging by 2030 and the recovery of 100% of all plastics by 2040
- the reduction in the use of plastic microbeads in rinse-off cosmetic and personal care consumer products to the extent possible by 2020, and to address other sources of microplastics.

## 2. Taking Action

Plastic has become a staple in modern life as it has many properties that make it a material of choice. It is durable, lightweight, costs less than alternatives to transport, can be sterilized, and extends product life.

An action plan that targets zero waste does not mean zero plastic. It means plastic reduction and improved plastics life-cycle management to achieve a more circular plastics economy. This involves work to influence plastic product design to promote recycled content. It also means having the right systems in place to recover plastics and flow them back in the economy, preferably in Canada.

To reach this ideal and move closer to a zero-waste target, Canada needs to increase its efforts significantly. Currently, it is estimated that only nine per cent of all plastic in Canada is recycled. This estimate considered plastic from all sources, including plastics that have traditionally been hard to collect and recycle like those plastics found in some packaging, clothing, cars, and construction and commercial waste.

Significant volumes of plastic enter the oceans, lakes and waterways in Canada. It is estimated that almost 10,000 metric tonnes of plastic enters the Great Lakes each year[ii]. This pollution, originating in Canada and the US, includes microbeads from personal care products, plastic shavings and droplets from commercial and industrial sources, clothing fibre and litter - plastic bags, bottles, straws and cigarette butts.[iii]

Governments, industry, stakeholders, civil society and the public all have a role to play to advance plastic waste reduction. In February 2019 CCME hosted a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties for a two-day workshop to hear from

diverse perspectives and inform this Action Plan. Insights generated during this workshop supported CCME jurisdictions in identifying six priority action areas in Phase 1. These action areas include:

1) extended producer responsibility
2) single-use and disposable products
3) national performance requirements and standards
4) incentives for a circular economy
5) infrastructure and innovation investments
6) public procurement and green operations.

CCME developed the following actions for each of these areas.

## Priority Action 1: Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

EPR programs are recognized as one of the most effective mechanisms to support the creation of a circular economy. They improve recycling rates, reduce litter, and create the conditions to incent efficiency and reduce costs for end-of-life management. Under an EPR program, companies making products are responsible for end-of-life management of their products and/or packaging. The EPR program establishes targets for collection and recycling performance for companies or organizations implementing the program.

As a competitive, market-based approach to manage the reuse, recycling and safe disposal of waste products and packaging, extended producer responsibility is recognized as a leading approach for reducing plastic waste in a cost-efficient and responsible manner.

Recognizing that EPR is essential to achieving zero plastic waste, CCME will facilitate consistent EPR programs for plastics. CCME will work with stakeholders and other interested parties to develop guidance that will be informed by existing successful initiatives, including EPR, which are currently in place within jurisdictions to manage plastics. It will identify the components and tools that can be used by jurisdictions across Canada and will include guidance on common material categories and product definitions; performance standards to guide reuse and recycling programs; options to encourage innovation and reduce costs; and clear monitoring and verification approaches.

Additional actions may be completed by jurisdictions to ensure the EPR approach is consistent and comprehensive. EPR tools and guidance developed by CCME will be completed by the end of 2020 and available for application at the discretion of jurisdictions.

## Priority Action 2: Single Use and Disposable Plastic Products

Many single-use, disposable plastic products can help to reduce food waste, protect health, improve safety and lower transportation emissions and costs. Some single-use plastic items can be avoided, designed to be readily recyclable, redesigned or replaced by alternatives that are more durable, have a lower environmental footprint and/or are easier to recover at end of life.

To facilitate action on single-use plastic waste, CCME will develop a roadmap to strengthen management of single-use, disposable plastics. This work will involve defining and identifying the single-use items that are most likely to be released into the environment or pose other end-of-life management challenges. CCME will work with stakeholders and other interested parties to promote solutions to single-use and disposable plastic items and identify sustainable alternatives to their use. Work associated with this action area will be completed by the end of 2021.

## Priority Action 3: National Performance Requirements and Standards

Plastics within the marketplace have been designed for specific safety, functional and/or aesthetic requirements and are not always easy to recover and recycle. Products can be designed to better incorporate recycled content and to facilitate recycling at the end of product life. Common standards and performance requirements can facilitate complementary practices along the value chain and create a level playing field to accelerate progress towards the goals of this Action Plan. Standards can also support consumers to make more informed, eco-conscious purchase choices.

Given the important role performance standards and requirements play in moving to a more circular economy, Canada will lead the actions associated with updating national standards, engaging CCME members, stakeholders and interested parties to develop targets and standards for recycled content, certified compostable items, and for repair, remanufacturing and refurbishment. CCME will lead the development of a reference compendium of existing guidelines for designing items so that they can be recycled at the end of their life, including recommendations for jurisdictions to consider during implementation.

## Priority Action 4: Incentives for a Circular Economy

Supporting a shift to a more circular economy will be accelerated when the cost of recycling is reduced, and other barriers are removed. Examples of other barriers include harmful additives that lower the quality of recycled plastic, fluctuating supply of recycled plastic, low landfill costs, and product or material choices that cannot be repaired or refurbished.

Regulatory, economic and fiscal measures can play an important role in supporting a circular plastics economy and highlight the value of these materials in the economy. Action by CCME and/or individual jurisdictions will include developing best management practices for disposal bans, facilitating economic and fiscal incentives for greater value recovery (i.e., repair,

remanufacture/refurbishment, recycling), and the federal government will continue to control toxic substances, including additives or products. CCME actions will be completed by the end of 2019 and available for application at the discretion of jurisdictions. In addition, member jurisdictions at their discretion, will consider how regulatory requirements or non-regulatory approaches can support product life extension, incorporate recycled content, redefine waste as a resource, and support overall waste reduction.

### Priority Action 5: Infrastructure and Innovation Investments

Supporting the transition to a more circular economy for plastics requires innovation to influence change at the design, collection and recovery stages. Transition will not be immediate – it will take time to influence change.

Recognizing that industry often needs support to build momentum and achieve a significant economic transition, CCME member jurisdictions will promote the use of incentives. This could include targeted investments for infrastructure and innovation in the areas of plastic design, production and recovery, and/or for transitioning current operations to circular economy practices. The Government of Canada will assess infrastructure needs for improved plastic life-cycle management. and work with jurisdictions, industry and funding organizations to identify how they can support access to capital funding. This will be completed by the end of 2020.

### Priority Action 6: Public Procurement and Green Operations

Collectively, CCME member jurisdictions purchase significant volumes of products containing plastic. Recognizing the influence that government can have within the marketplace, and building on work being undertaken by the Government of Canada, CCME will facilitate information and best practice sharing between member jurisdictions to strengthen their sustainable procurement policies and practices to support a more circular economy for plastics.

CCME acknowledges that member jurisdictions have all taken steps towards more sustainable practices, which may include considerations related to lifecycle management, recycled content, packaging and single-use plastics reduction, durability and repairability. Given the many forms these policies and practices take, the Government of Canada will develop guidelines that will provide the tools for jurisdictions to update their sustainable procurement practices to incorporate best practice principles for plastics management and support the transition to a more circular economy. This work will be completed by the end of 2021.

## Summary of Action Items

CCME and member jurisdictions will work with stakeholders and other interested parties in the development of the following actions.

| Actions | Completion Date |
|---|---|
| **1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** | |
| Facilitate consistent EPR programs for plastics through the development of guidance on: | |
| • Common material categories and product definitions | **December 2020** |
| • Performance standards for reuse and recycling programs | |
| • Options to encourage innovation and reduce costs | |
| • Standard monitoring and verification approaches | |
| **2. Single-Use & Disposable Plastic Products** | |
| Develop a roadmap to address priority single-use and disposable plastics most commonly released into the environment by: | **December 2021** |
| • Defining priority items to be targeted for waste reduction efforts | |
| • Establishing targets to support plastic waste reduction | |
| • Identifying mechanisms to reduce waste | |
| **3. National Performance Requirements and Standards** | |
| Develop the following to establish national performance requirements for plastic: | |
| • Targets & timelines for increasing recycled content; update standards for measuring and reporting recycled content | **December 2020** |
| • New standards for bio-based plastic products (e.g., certified compostable packaging and single-use products) | **December 2021** |
| • Roadmap to establish targets for specific sectors for repair, reuse and remanufacture/refurbishment; complete standards or other requirements as needed to implement | **2022** |
| • Compile a reference compendium of existing guidelines for recyclability and recommendations for use by jurisdictions and industry | **December 2021** |

| Actions | Completion Date |
|---|---|
| **4. Incentives for a Circular Economy** | |
| • Develop best management practices for disposal bans of end-of-life plastics, levies and incentives to support implementation by jurisdictions | **December 2019** |
| • Develop agreements and tools with willing industry sectors to control toxic or harmful additives in plastics and achieve plastics waste reduction | **on-going** |
| • Implement economic and fiscal incentives or best management practices and remove regulatory barriers | **on-going** |
| **5. Infrastructure and Innovation Investments** | |
| • Assess infrastructure needs for improved plastic life-cycle management, and work with jurisdictions, industry and funding organizations to identify how to facilitate access to capital funding or financing | **2020** |
| • Promote or increase access to capital funding or financing for innovation in and infrastructure for improved plastic life-cycle management. | **on-going** |
| **6. Public Procurement and Green Operations** | |
| Develop guidelines and tools for government procurement practices to green operations and reduce plastic: | |
| • Facilitate the exchange of tools and best practices for the public procurement of sustainable plastics | **2020** |
| • Guidance for reducing plastic waste in government operations and events | **December 2021** |
| • Guidelines and tools to incorporate national recycled content targets and requirements (reuse, recycling, composting, repair & remanufacture/refurbishment) into government procurement requirements | |

## 3. Collaboration and Follow-up

Moving to a more circular economy with less plastic waste will take time and considerable effort. Leadership from and collaboration among all CCME member jurisdictions, industry, and citizens is needed.

Work is beginning on Phase 2 of this Action Plan to develop CCME commitments that focus on reducing plastic waste found in our oceans, Great Lakes and inland lakes and waterways. Specifically, Phase 2 action areas include reducing plastic waste from aquatic activities, clean-up, research and monitoring, consumer awareness, as well as taking global action. Building on momentum from Phase 1, a similar approach will be taken to develop Phase 2 of the Action Plan.

This will include working through CCME to consult and engage industry, interested parties and non-governmental organizations to shape Phase 2 priority actions.

## 4. Reporting on Progress

Federal, provincial and territorial governments are working together to advance the priorities of the Canada-wide Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste. CCME will report on progress to ministers regularly, starting with the 2020 Council of Ministers meeting. This will help ensure progress on our common goals, and accountability to Canadians.

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[i] Deloitte Canada. 2019. Economic Study of the Canadian Plastic Industry, Market and Waste. https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/managing-pollution/publications/plastic-waste-report.html

[ii] Hoffman, M. and Hittinger, E. 2017. Inventory and transport of plastic debris in the Laurentian Great Lakes. *Science Direct.* 115 273-281.

[iii] Community clean up 2018 https://www.shorelinecleanup.ca/storage/resources/gcsc-2018annualreport-190416.pdf