

Closing the Loop:

Building a Circular Economy in New Brunswick



A circular economy is a model of economic development that aims to keep materials and resources in use for as long as possible, minimizing waste and pollution. It is a departure from the traditional linear economy that follows a ‘take-make-waste’ approach, where resources are extracted, transformed into products, used, and then discarded. A circular economy, on the other hand, seeks to keep resources and products in use by creating closed-loop systems that recover, reuse, and recycle materials.

Why change the way we make stuff?

Simply put, our current linear economy is responsible for significant environmental degradation, including climate change, deforestation and water pollution. A circular economy aims to reduce waste and pollution, helping to mitigate these environmental impacts and promote sustainability. Other benefits include:

Improving resource scarcity: Our current linear economy is unsustainable in the long term as it relies on finite resources that are becoming increasingly

scarce. A circular economy, by contrast, aims to keep resources in use for as long as possible, reducing the need for virgin resources and promoting resource efficiency.

Economic benefits: A circular economy can create new economic opportunities by promoting innovation, reducing waste and costs, and creating new jobs. According to the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#), transitioning to a circular economy could generate **\$4.5 trillion in economic benefits by 2030**.

Social benefits:

A circular economy can help reduce inequality and improve access to resources. By promoting a more sustainable and equitable approach to resource use, a circular economy can help improve the well-being of individuals and communities.



Circular economy in action: what it looks like

Many companies around the world have already adopted circular economy practices in their operations, demonstrating the viability and benefits of this approach. Here are some examples from industrial and commercial sectors:



patagonia[®]

[Patagonia](#) is an outdoor clothing company that is committed to sustainability and circular economy principles. It has implemented several circular economy initiatives, including the 'Worn Wear' program, which allows customers to return their used Patagonia clothing for repair or reuse. Patagonia also uses recycled materials in their products, and their clothing is designed to last a long time, reducing the need for frequent replacements. The company has also invested in renewable energy and has implemented sustainable business practices throughout its operations.



This multinational consumer goods company has [embraced circular economy principles](#) in its operations. Unilever has committed to using 100 per cent recyclable packaging by 2025 and has implemented a closed loop system where it collects used packaging from consumers and recycles it into new products. For example, waste from the production of Lipton tea bags is reused as fuel for Unilever's factories, and waste from the production of Knorr soup is turned into animal feed. The company has redesigned its manufacturing processes to reduce waste through: lean manufacturing, which focuses on minimizing waste and maximizing efficiency (including reducing inventory and streamlining production processes; and, material efficiency, where the company has reduced the amount of plastic used in its packaging, and has implemented lightweighting techniques to reduce the amount of materials used in products.



Interface[®]

[Interface](#) is a flooring manufacturer that has set a goal of operating as a 'mission zero' enterprise, meaning it aims to have zero negative environmental impact. To achieve this, Interface has implemented a closed-loop recycling program which recovers old carpet tiles and recycles them into new products. The company has also adopted a modular design approach, which allows its carpet tiles to be easily replaced and reused without having to replace the entire floor.



PHILIPS

The electronics company has implemented a [circular economy approach](#) in its lighting division. Instead of selling light bulbs, Philips offers a lighting service where it retains ownership of the bulbs and provides lighting as a service. This allows Philips to recover and recycle the bulbs at the end of their useful life, reducing waste and promoting resource efficiency.



Developing a circular economy in New Brunswick will reduce pollution and waste in our communities, help conserve our land, forests and raw materials, create new jobs and opportunities and promote fairer access to resources.

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Recommendations for New Brunswick



The provincial government can use several policy levers, from strategy development to capacity building, economic incentives to regulation, to promote, facilitate and enable a circular economy. The following are our recommendations to government for advancing a circular economy in New Brunswick:

Develop a comprehensive circular economy strategy

New Brunswick should develop a comprehensive circular economy strategy that sets clear goals, targets, and action plans for transitioning to a circular economy. This strategy should involve collaboration between government, industry, and other stakeholders to ensure buy-in and implementation.

Support circular economy innovation

New Brunswick should support and invest in circular economy innovation by providing funding, tax incentives, and other financial support to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and established companies that are developing and implementing circular economy solutions.

Build circular economy infrastructure

New Brunswick should invest in circular economy infrastructure, such as recycling facilities, waste-to-energy plants, and material recovery facilities, to create a more robust and efficient circular economy. This infrastructure should be designed to recover, reuse, and recycle as much waste and resources as possible, reducing the need for virgin materials.

Promote circular economy education and awareness

New Brunswick should promote circular economy education and awareness to businesses and consumers. This can include developing educational programs and resources that explain the benefits of a circular economy and how to implement circular economy practices in business operations and daily life.

Foster circular economy partnerships

New Brunswick should foster partnerships between government, industry, academia, and other stakeholders to promote circular economy development and implementation. These partnerships can facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices, accelerating the transition to a circular economy.

A circular economy is a promising model of economic development that can help New Brunswick reduce waste and pollution, improve resource efficiency, and create economic and environmental benefits.

By developing a comprehensive strategy, supporting innovation, building infrastructure, promoting education and awareness, and fostering partnerships, New Brunswick can advance the development of a circular economy and reap the benefits that come with it for generations to come.



The Conservation Council of New Brunswick wants to help communities move toward a circular economy. You can learn more about this work by checking out our research paper, [New Brunswick's Waste Reduction and Circular Economy Journey](#), which reviews the province's current waste infrastructure, policies, and educational materials, looks at the obstacles being experienced in each region, and offers recommendations to build an environmentally-friendly and efficient circular economy.



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