

Divert NS 2023 Scholarship Essay – Jaime Burns

Executive Summary

A circular economy provides economic opportunities for individuals and businesses. Previously discarded resources are captured and used in creative new ways for manufacturing products. Communities that take part in a circular economy provide residents with access to resources that enhance their quality of life. This is in addition to the positive environmental impact.

A circular economy is used with other environmental programs (including; reduce, reuse, repair, recycle, and recover) aimed minimizing environmental impact.

To grow a circular economy in Nova Scotia, I see a need for more transparency from organizations to publish verified information regarding ethical sourcing of material, whether the manufacturer has a demonstrated culture of continual improvement regarding environmental impact, whether procedures are in place in the event of an environmental emergency resulting from the facility's work, environmental impact of the manufacturing facility, and an outline of strategies the manufacturer uses for waste reduction. This would allow consumers to make informed decisions.

There is an opportunity to spread awareness of Federal and Provincial incentive programs for businesses that have ideas and projects related to the circular economy.

Essay

The Government of Canada website describes a linear economy as “The way our economies extract, use, then dispose of resources is putting pressure on our natural systems, communities, and public health. This is a linear economy—it moves in a straight line from resource extraction to waste disposal.”

The Government of Canada website describes a circular economy as “... nothing is waste. The circular economy retains and recovers as much value as possible from resources by reusing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing, repurposing, or recycling products and materials.”

(Circular Economy, December 23, 2022, Circular Economy section)

Circular economy in a product’s life cycle include environmentally responsible decisions regarding; design, material sourcing, manufacturing, management for waste for durability and repairability. “Its end-of-life is also planned for by its original manufacturers, and it can be taken apart or recycled easily once it is no longer usable in its original form.”

(Circular Economy, December 23, 2022, Circular Economy section)

An example of a small scale circular model that has been successfully implemented in Halifax, NS is the HFX Tool Library & Workshop. Their website description is “The Halifax Tool Library is a non-profit society that provides borrowing access to an inventory of over 2000 tools and community workshop space to our members.” “It is also a workshop where members can work on projects and teach each other how. We seek to remove barriers so that people can work on anything they desire.” (HFX Tool Library & Workshop, N.D.) A tool library reduces the quantity of tools purchased by individuals.

Most people have the experience of purchasing a piece of trendy clothing - that often include synthetic material – that quickly wore out and was thrown in the trash. Fast fashion is often trend driven and even if it's donated to a charity may still end up in a landfill. This is an example of a linear economy product.

However, if a consumer purchased a classic style of a piece of clothing – perhaps made from a natural material – the person can wear it for a long time because it was not purchased to follow a trend. If the fabric needs repair, the person can look up tutorials online for garment repair. There are very good options available for invisible repairs or visible repair that looks nice. When clothes are no longer useful to you or someone you know, an option is to donate them to a charity. The charity can have a system in place for selling or donating clothing that did not sell in their retail outlet to an environmentally responsible manufacturer that reuses the material to create new products. This can be an example of a circular economy.

A larger scale circular model is CACITH Inc. (Tengiva), Quebec, was a 2021 winner of the Canadian Plastics Innovation Challenges. CACITH Inc. to “Create a Recyclers’ Network to identify, trace, and quantify textile waste. The Network would also bring together stakeholders on one centralized platform to facilitate material collection, exchange, and distribution, allowing otherwise waste materials to find new markets.” (Canadian Plastics Innovation Challenges, March 5, 2021, Government of Canada Challenge category: Textiles and Microfibers section)

“The Government of Canada is pleased to support made-in-Canada solutions to plastic waste and pollution. Small businesses are key partners in achieving Canada’s vision of a zero-plastic-waste future by 2030. By working together, we can create a cleaner future, while growing the economy and creating good jobs.”

– The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

(Government of Canada Supports Innovative Made-In-Canada Solutions, July 12, 2021, quotes section)

Information regarding the CACITH Inc. initiative that caused it to be a 2021 winner of the Canadian Plastics Innovation Challenges as it stands today is not available on their website or news release. A November 30, 2022 Tengiva Facebook post announces that they are B Corp certified. “By being B Corp certified, Tengiva can demonstrate that we are actively improving. Not only our environmental impact, but our social impact as well.” (Tengiva, November 30, 2022)

The B Corp website describes B Corp Certification as “...a designation that a business is meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials.” (About B Corp Certification, N.D., Measuring a company’s entire social and environmental impact section)

An opportunity exists for counties in rural Nova Scotia to have a conveniently located salvaged building supply depots to provide affordable reclaimed building material. The current systems most frequently used in rural Nova Scotia are buy, sell, and give away websites. Online marketplaces certainly have a place. However, they exclude people who are not comfortable going to a residence to purchase an item. Online marketplaces exclude people who do not use computers or have limited ability with computers. There are potential customers who prefer to see products in person in advance of making a decision. People with materials to donate may have similar concerns. As a result, I expect otherwise useable material sometimes goes to landfills unnecessarily.

One strategically located salvaged building supply depot could serve several Nova Scotia counties. Perhaps an enhancement would be a delivery service by the depot for a fee that - at minimum - covers the expenses directly related to the service.

Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia has ReStore locations across Canada and in the United States. There is a ReStore location in Dartmouth, NS. The Habitat for Humanity ReStore website business description is, “The ReStore is a building supply and home renovation store that accepts and resells new

and gently-used building materials and home décor items. Proceeds from The ReStore help fund Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia.” (Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia, N.D.)

“ReStores help the environment by diverting thousands of tons of usable materials away from already overflowing landfills. Stores and manufacturers can donate end-of-line, scratch and dent, old stock and customer returns that might otherwise be sent to landfills; individuals can donate unneeded materials and furnishings.” (Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia, N.D., Waste Reduction section)

They offer free pickup within the Halifax municipality and a tax receipt. (The website lists unacceptable donations.) Some of the staff members are volunteers. It appears that a goal of Habitat for Humanity is making donating as easy as possible.

Although circular economies tend to be inclusive, inclusivity must be a factor that is considered when setting up a program. If barriers for residents are encountered, they must be fixed.

Circular model businesses’ common thread appears to be continual improvement on their programs.

To grow a circular economy in Nova Scotia, I see a need for more transparency from organizations to publish standardized, verified information regarding ethical sourcing of material, whether the manufacturer has a demonstrated culture of continual improvement regarding environmental impact, whether procedures are in place in the event of an environmental emergency resulting from the facility’s work, environmental impact of the manufacturing facility, and an outline of strategies the manufacturer uses for waste reduction. This would allow consumers to make informed decisions.

There is an opportunity to spread awareness of Federal funding opportunities for businesses that have business ideas and projects related to the circular economy. Awareness can also be spread when Provincial waste reduction initiatives are taking place.

Residents can always reach out to their elected representative when they see opportunities for a circular model business process. Residents can also volunteer with these programs.

I have found that there are a variety of successful (mostly) circular model businesses. These companies tend to have their environmental programs prominently displayed on their websites. It seems that they see a marketing advantage from these programs.

Nova Scotians can look at our current and developing industries in a new way to spot opportunities to create a circular economy.

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