CCES 2025 Session Summary

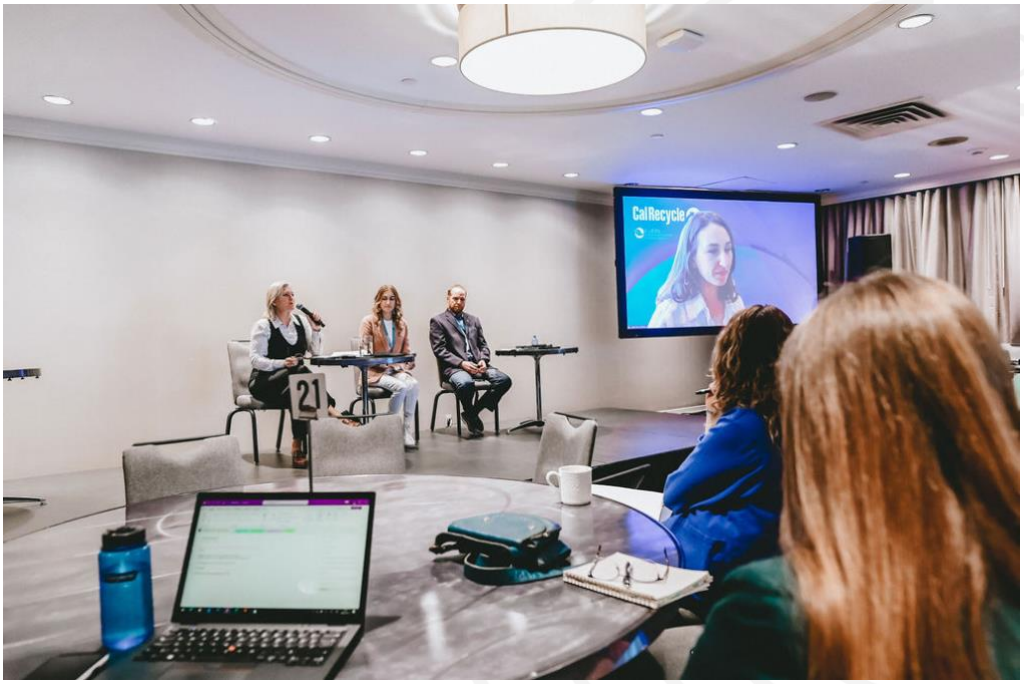
The Reuse Revolution: Expanding the Reuse Economy Through Policy, Technology & Market Drivers

The reuse economy is experiencing rapid global growth, with Canada emerging as a hub of innovation in this space. This session offered a forward-looking exploration of the future of reuse systems in Canada and beyond, examining the evolving policy and regulatory frameworks that support reuse at the federal, provincial/state, and municipal levels. In addition to single-use plastics bans and extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations, panelists explored municipal-scale initiatives such as eco-levers and local bylaws that directly incentivize or mandate reuse and serve as crucial proof-of-concept for future legislation. The discussion also addressed the challenges of standardization across jurisdictions and highlighted opportunities to develop cohesive, cross-level policies that enable reuse at scale.

Date / Location: Wednesday, April 16, 2025 / Montreal, Canada

Speakers:

- **Clarissa Morawski**, CEO & Co-Founder, Reloop (moderator)
- **Lucia Pereira**, Head of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Réseau Vrac et Réemploi (virtual)
- **Clara Vazeix, Deputy Director,** California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (virtual)
- **Andréanne Fiola,** Environmental Advisor, City of Terrebonne
- **Joey Leckman**, Municipal Councillor in Environment, City of Prévost



Summary - Speaker Presentations

1. Lucia Perera, Réseau Vrac et Réemploi - France

Lucia presented on the French regulatory framework, which has been highly influential in shaping the European Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). Key aspects of the French approach on reuse include:

- **Ambitious Targets:** France aims for a 20% reduction in single-use plastic packaging by 2025, with half of this achieved through reuse. The goal is to eliminate single-use plastic packaging by 2040.

- **Producer Obligations:** By 2027, 10% of all packaging (household and professional) placed on the market by producers must be *reused* (meaning it has completed at least one rotation of collection, sorting, and washing), not merely *reusable*. This indirectly necessitates an organized return and collection system, for example, through a monetary deposit.

- **EPR Schemes' Role:** French EPR schemes (like Citeo) are mandated to finance, support, and standardize reuse. This includes:
  - **Standardization:** Developing standardized packaging for various products (bottles, takeaway containers, jars) to enable scaling.
  - **Financial Support (OPEX):** Covering operational costs such as collection and transport of reused packaging to massification centers.
  - **Financial Support (CAPEX):** Allocating at least 5% of their revenue (approximately 100 million Euros in 2024) to fund reuse solutions, such as adapting conditioning lines for reusable packaging or purchasing such packaging. Producers using 100% reusable packaging can receive a 100% premium, effectively paying no eco-contribution.

- **Challenges:** A current difficulty in France is the lack of obligation for distributors to collect packaging, which complicates the implementation of reuse systems.

Lucia also highlighted the ReUse project by Citeo, which will launch a national mutualized reuse system in Western and Northern France, starting with standardized wide-neck bottles and 75cl beer bottles in May. Alongside this, regional reuse loops established in 2023 have already seen over 13 million reused packages circulate, with “return me” branding developed by Réseau Vrac et Réemploi.

→ End of presentation question: France has a very robust policy framework to develop reuse at the system level. Are there any challenges associated with funding reuse through an EPR scheme?

Lucia discussed the financial obligations of EPR schemes (like Citeo) to fund reuse. While the law mandates at least 5% of revenues to be dedicated to reuse (CAPEX), **Lucia noted that this amount is insufficient, especially when compared to the much larger funding for recycling.** She argued for a more equitable distribution to balance the economic model of reuse with the linear one. Another significant challenge in France is the **lack of control and**

sanctions for non-compliance with reuse obligations, which leads producers to make symbolic efforts without genuine commitment. The new European PPWR is crucial in this regard, as it mandates member states to implement proportional and effective sanction mechanisms by February 2027.

2. **Clara Vazeix, CalRecycle - California, United States**

Clara from CalRecycle presented California's comprehensive approach to a circular economy, emphasizing reuse integration across various programs, particularly through **SB 54, the Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act**. While specific regulations are still being drafted and revised, SB 54 sets ambitious targets:

- **25% reduction in single-use plastic packaging.**
- **65% recycling rate for single-use packaging.**
- **All single-use packaging to be recyclable or compostable by 2032.**

SB 54 implements extended producer responsibility, aiming to generate revenue streams for circular economy infrastructure by making producers financially responsible for the end-of-life management of their products.[1] Although specific reuse components within SB 54's regulations are under development, the intent is to build supportive infrastructure.

Clara also highlighted other significant EPR programs in California:

- **Existing Programs:** California has four established EPR programs for carpet, mattresses, pharmaceuticals, and paints.

- **SB 707 (Responsible Textile Recovery Act):** This recent legislation addresses the significant amount of textile waste ending up in landfills. It mandates textile producers to establish stewardship organizations and collection infrastructure. Critically, it **prioritizes reuse over recycling** by supporting programs for extending garment life and creates funding mechanisms for reuse enterprises like repair centers, thrift stores, and upcycling businesses.

- **AB 2440 (Responsible Battery Recovery Act):** This act establishes a producer responsibility program for batteries, focusing on safe collection, management, and the development of infrastructure for battery refurbishment and reuse. This also aims to reduce fire risks at waste facilities.

Beyond EPR, CalRecycle is developing a **Zero Waste Plan**, due January 1st, 2026. This plan aims to elevate reuse and source reduction as cornerstones of the state's waste management approach. It includes 22 recommendations across eight categories, covering policy, finance, infrastructure, and innovation, reflecting a transparent and collaborative development process. Clara’s presentation underscored California's commitment to integrating reuse into its waste management strategies, despite the initial stages of regulatory drafting for many of these new programs.

→ End-of-presentation question: Is EPR the right tool to develop reuse at a system level?

Clara affirmed that EPR is **increasingly becoming the main tool in California for waste management, including reuse.** However, she stressed that **EPR alone isn't sufficient**. Local initiatives, grant funding, and pilot projects have been crucial in demonstrating the viability of reuse and building the foundation for broader EPR programs. While California's budget has tightened, limiting recent grant funding, CalRecycle remains committed to supporting businesses that align with reuse goals.

3. Andréanne Fiola – City of Terrebonne, Québec, Canada

Andréanne Fiola from the city of Terrebonne, Québec, discussed their pioneering bylaw banning single-use packaging for in-house dining, aiming to reduce waste at the source rather than just switching to compostables. Terrebonne, home to Quebec's largest landfill, felt a strong responsibility to lead on waste reduction.

Before implementing the bylaw in 2023, the city engaged extensively with restaurants to understand their operations, existing solutions, and economic concerns. This collaboration was crucial, especially as reusable options were less prevalent three years ago. The primary concern raised by businesses was cost.

To address this, Terrebonne implemented a **$15,000 grant program per business** to help cover transition costs. They also provided a multi-month lead time for businesses to prepare and a **six-month transition phase** after the regulation's adoption to allow businesses to deplete existing single-use stock. A study found that 90% of businesses found the six-month period sufficient.
Key findings from their study and experience include:

- **Minimal Staffing Changes:** 90% of businesses did not need to hire new staff for washing reusables.
- **Existing Infrastructure:** 70% of businesses did not need to purchase new dishwashers or reusables, as they already had suitable equipment in their back kitchens.
- **Unexpected Grievance:** The most disliked aspect of the regulation by businesses was the federal ban on plastic straws, which they mistakenly attributed to the city's bylaw.

Andréanne emphasized the economic benefits of reuse. A forthcoming economic study, expected in July, will quantify the savings for businesses. Early examples are promising:

- **A local restaurant saved $1,000 per month** by reducing waste collection frequency.
- **A mall reduced its residual materials by 60%** after the transition.

These findings suggest that reuse can be economically beneficial for businesses, not just environmentally positive, primarily through reduced purchasing of single-use items and lower waste disposal costs.

Terrebonne is also developing an environmental rebate system for municipalities using its landfill, aiming to incentivize other cities to adopt reuse and source reduction practices.

→ End of presentation question: How do you see Terrebonne continuing to scale reuse in the future?

Andréanne discussed a novel approach to scaling: an **environmental rebate system** for municipalities using Terrebonne's landfill. **A fee will be levied on every tonne of waste buried in the landfill**, and these funds will be **redistributed to municipalities that implement concrete source reduction actions**, such as adopting single-use item regulations. This financial incentive aims to encourage more municipalities to embrace reuse and waste reduction, as direct obligations are often met with resistance.

4. Joey Leckman – City of Prévost, Québec, Canada

Joey Leckman from the City of Prévost in Quebec, discussed Prévost's implementation of an eco-fee on specific single-use plastic items to encourage reuse. Recognizing the enormous volume of single-use items consumed annually (e.g., billions of water bottles and coffee cups in Quebec), Prévost sought to leverage a 2017 Quebec law allowing municipalities to levy such fees.

The City implemented its legislation in three phases:

1. **Removal of small single-use items:** This included plastic coffee stirrers, plastic Q-tips and plastic straws.

2. **Mandate for bulk options:** Businesses selling water or windshield washer fluid were required to offer bulk options, such as pumps for windshield washer fluid directly into cars, bypassing single-use containers entirely.

3. **Eco-fees on specific products:**

    - Windshield washer containers (gallons): $0.50
    - Bottled water (less than 750ml): $0.10
    - Packs of bottled water: $0.50
    - Disposable coffee cups: $0.10
    - Disposable tablecloths: $0.25
    - Pack of disposable utensils and plates: $0.50

To illustrate the vast scale of the single-use problem, Prévost, with a population of 14,000 and 24 participating stores, highlighted the impressive quantities of single-use items consumed over 24 months, underscoring the challenge this presents:

- **Disposable coffee cups:** 465,000 disposable coffee cups sold.
- **Water bottles:** 400,000 water bottles sold.
- **Disposable windshield washer containers:** 60,000 containers sold.
- **Pack of disposable utensils/plates:** 30,000 packs sold

The eco-fees generate approximately $45,000 annually, which is placed into a dedicated fund. This fund is legally restricted to projects focused on waste reduction. A committee, comprising

elected officials, municipal workers, and citizens, meets quarterly to review proposals for utilizing these funds.

Examples of projects funded include:

- **Coffee shop initiatives:** Supporting a local coffee shop's use of mason jar-style reusable cups.
- **Zero-waste living course:** A six-month program for families to track and reduce their waste.
- **Reusable container system for restaurants:** A partnership with a company called Bopaq to implement a deposit-return system for food takeout containers. Customers pay a deposit for a reusable container, which is refunded upon return to designated collection sites.

Joey acknowledged the challenges of being the first city to implement such measures, especially with the program's announcement coinciding with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they successfully managed the transition, demonstrating that economic incentives can significantly alter both business and consumer behavior towards reuse.

→ End of presentation question: How does Prévost's experience with its eco-fee on single-use plastics demonstrate a path for other municipalities to adopt similar reuse regulations?

Drawing parallels to Prévost's earlier success in enforcing building decarbonization, despite legal challenges, Joey emphasized that **being the first city to implement such measures paves the way for others.** He encouraged other municipalities to **use Prévost's publicly available bylaw text (found on Eco Choix) and for citizens to lobby their local politicians.** He believes that if a few major cities adopt similar regulations, the provincial government of Quebec will eventually be compelled to follow suit. Joey highlighted the significant reduction in waste in Prévost's public bins, demonstrating the direct impact of the eco-fee.

Audience Q&A

The discussion opened to audience questions.

Question 1: A representative from the City of Montreal inquired about the administrative burden of collecting eco-fees, given Montreal's over 9,000 food businesses. Joey Leckman acknowledged the difference in scale but explained that businesses are largely self-declaring their sales, and the city provides support. He suggested that large-scale implementation might involve targeted meetings with different types of businesses and potentially pilot projects in progressive neighborhoods.

Question 2: Another question addressed the challenge of introducing fees in an inflationary environment where consumers are price-sensitive. Joey Leckman admitted initial public resistance from businesses. However, he noted that the 50-cent fee is often less than the cost of driving to another town to avoid it. Over time, citizen pride in their city's progressive approach has grown, making the eco-fee an educational tool.

Question 3: Finally, a question from a Quebec RCM (Regional County Municipality) representative to Terrebonne clarified that their landfill is privately owned, which allowed for negotiation of specific terms, including an environmental rebate for participating municipalities, a reuse center, and an eco-center. The goal of the rebate is to incentivize other cities to adopt similar regulations, as Terrebonne's bylaw, despite being in place for two years, has not yet been replicated by other municipalities. Andréanne expressed hope that the financial incentive would encourage broader adoption.