

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Sustainable Development and Circular Economy: What's the Difference?

Several concepts are associated with sustainable environmental practices. Sustainable development is defined as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is based on a long-term approach that considers the inextricable nature of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development activities." (ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs [MELCCFP], 2025)

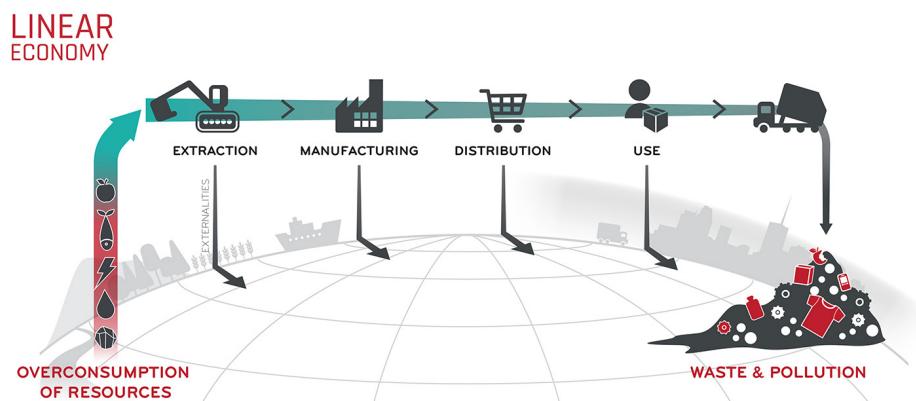
In contrast to the linear economy (extraction, processing, distribution, use, waste), the circular economy is defined as a system of production, exchange, and consumption that aims to optimize the use of resources at all stages of the life cycle of a good or service, through a circular approach, while reducing the environmental footprint and contributing to the well-being of individuals and communities. (Quebec Centre for consultation on the circular economy, 2016)

TRAVEL BETTER THANKS TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Tools to Support the Adoption of Circular Economy Practices in Tourist Accommodations.

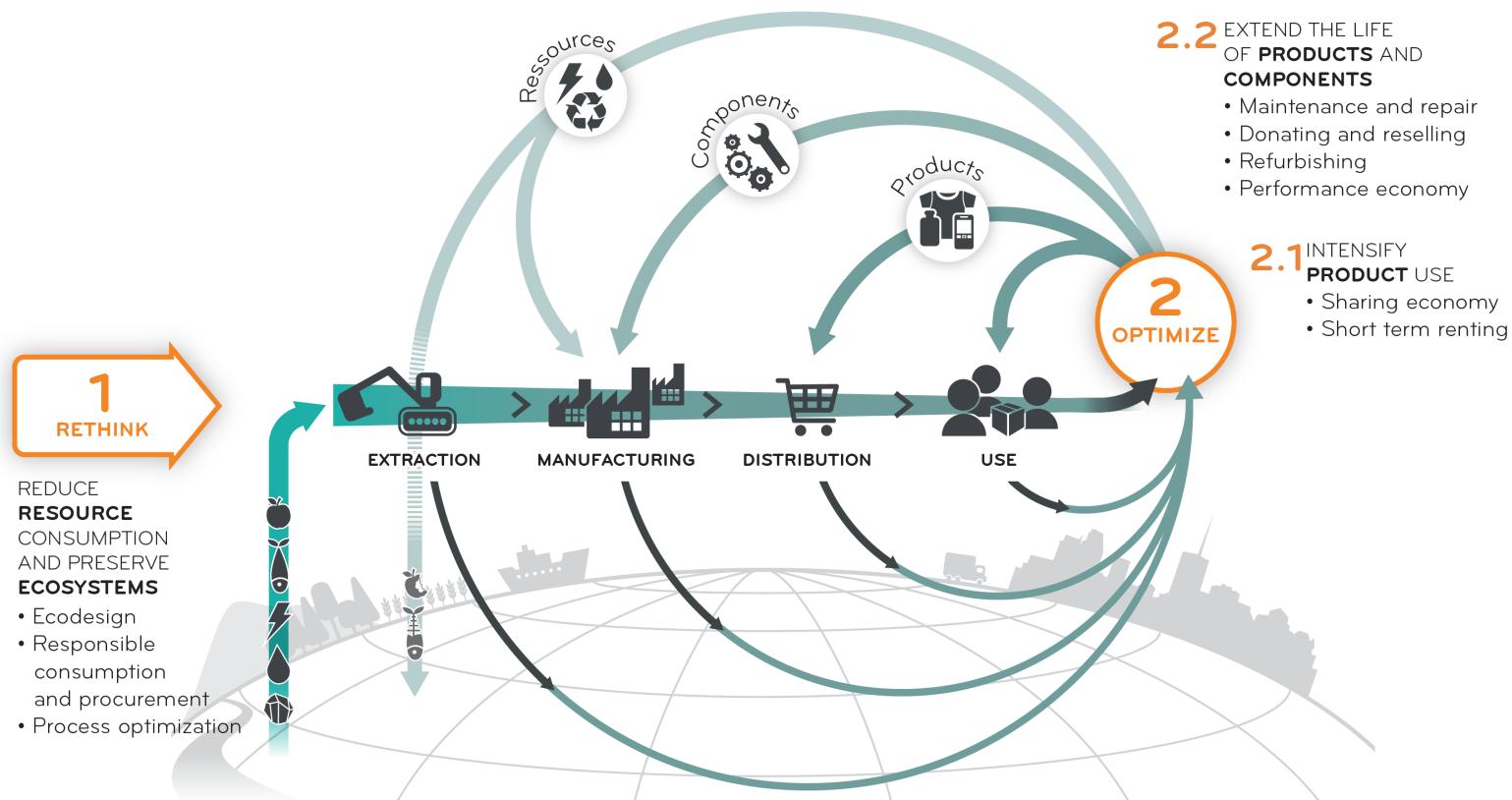


It is important to understand that the circular economy is part of an ecosystem-based approach. First, we need to rethink our modes of production and consumption in order to reduce our dependence on resources and thus limit impacts on ecosystems. Next, it is essential to optimize the use of these resources. This involves using products more intensively, extending the lifespan of products or their components, and finally giving them a new life.



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A way out of the linear economy

- Tourist accommodations = 21% of greenhouse gas emissions from the global tourism sector (UNWTO, 2020);
- Circularity rate of Québec's economy: 3.5%¹ (Circle Economy and RECYC-QUÉBEC, 2021).

¹ The circularity rate is a measure used to quantify the share of resources that come from materials circulating within Québec's economic system, compared to the total amount of resources used across the system, over a given period.

The following table outlines the 12 different circular economy strategies and provides examples of actions that can be implemented within a tourist accommodation.

1. RETHINK			
OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF ACTIONS
1.1 Rethink to reduce resource consumption and preserve the ecosystems that generate them	Eco-design	A strategy aimed at integrating environmental aspects of the design stage of products and services in order to minimize impacts throughout their life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design the building to be modular, serve multiple functions, or be easily deconstructed at the end of its use • Develop menus to minimize food waste, carefully selecting ingredients while planning for the processing of any remaining edible residues
	Responsible Consumption and Procurement	A strategy aimed at integrating sustainable development and social responsibility into the processes of purchasing or acquiring goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select products with lower energy consumption or with a certification demonstrating positive social and environmental impacts (according to the <i>Espace québécois de concertation sur les pratiques d'approvisionnement responsable [ECPAR]</i>) • Use recycled paper for printing • Eliminate or reduce the use of single-use products (plastic or otherwise) and replace them with reusable ones
	Operations Optimization	A strategy aimed at improving each of the organization's processes by seeking to reduce the consumption of raw materials, energy, water, and waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a greywater² reuse system for a secondary use, thereby reducing water consumption • Reorganize room linen management procedures by reducing the number of times sheets and towels are changed during a single stay • Implement a paperless management approach. For example : online purchases and reservations, confirmation and invoicing by email, digital arrival lists and registration forms, as well as technological solutions for holding paperless meetings • Extend the shelf life of food through improved preservation techniques, such as dehydration, or by monitoring the performance of refrigeration equipment

² Greywater refers to domestic wastewater, mainly from showers and baths, as well as from laundry, kitchen, and hand-washing. It can be reused for various purposes that do not require potable water, such as toilet flushing or cleaning outdoor surfaces..

2. OPTIMIZE

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF ACTIONS
2.1 Use products more intensively	Sharing economy	A strategy aimed at increasing the use of goods and products in circulation on the market by implementing exchange models (e.g., bartering). Priority is given to the temporary pooling of resources or the permanent redistribution of goods with or without compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer the community or other organizations a conference room that is used only a few hours per week, thereby optimizing the use of this heated, air-conditioned, or well-lit space
	Rental	A strategy aimed at intensifying the use of a good by avoiding the need for customers to purchase a product they only use occasionally. Instead, the good or service is made available in exchange for a fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent a printer or equipment that the establishment needs for a specific period only Offer bicycle rentals to customers Offer camping equipment rentals to customers wishing to engage in off-site activities, such as winter clothing or sleeping bags suitable for very low temperatures
2.2 Extend the lifespan of products and components	Maintenance and Repair	A strategy that extends the lifespan of a product by maintaining or repairing it, keeping it in good condition. When purchasing a good, priority should be given to durability, repairability, and reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with a repair company to fix any broken electronic products, for example, thus avoiding having to throw them away and buy new ones Establish a preventive maintenance schedule to ensure the proper functioning and quality of equipment and services (e.g., pools and spas)

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF ACTIONS
2.2 Extend the lifespan of products and components (continued)	Donation and Resale	A strategy aimed at putting back into circulation products that are no longer used by one user but are still in good condition and usable by others, either through donation or resale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate furniture that is no longer in style to a charity or sell it on a resale platform instead of throwing it away
	Refurbishment	A strategy aimed at refurbishing a product or component, with a warranty equivalent to or close to that of a new item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider purchasing refurbished appliances for rooms or the kitchen • Repair and reupholster furniture in poor condition (e.g., chairs, tables) to bring it up to date and extend its useful life
	Functional Economy	A business model that promotes selling the use of a product rather than the product itself, focusing on performance in use. Users buy the function, not the product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy lighting services by the hour instead of light bulbs • Buy an all-inclusive coffee service instead of a coffee maker
2.3 Give resources a new life	Industrial Ecology	A network of companies and communities linked by exchanges of materials (e.g., by-products), water, or energy. Such exchanges generate synergies, as the waste of one becomes the resource of another. The terms "symbiosis" or "industrial symbiosis" are often used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your regional symbiosis to evaluate opportunities for synergies with other nearby companies, both for inputs (e.g., supplies) and outputs (e.g., waste) • Create synergies by sharing (exchanging) knowledge, labour, equipment, or storage space

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF ACTIONS
2.3 Give resources a new life (continued)	Recycling and Composting	<p>Recycling is the use of recovered material in a manufacturing process as a substitute for virgin material. The circular economy makes it possible to establish the shortest possible recycling loops and thus favour local recycling markets over export markets.</p> <p>Composting is a biological treatment process that allows organic matter to biodegrade under the action of aerobic microorganisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a recyclable and organic waste collection service • Collect carpets so they can be sent to a recycler • Recycle hazardous products (e.g., batteries, compact fluorescent lamps, paint)
	Recovery	A strategy aimed at avoiding disposal by transforming waste materials to useful products or energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incineration with energy recovery, combustion in an industrial boiler or cement kiln, pyrolysis, and gasification • Recovery of heat generated by equipment (IT or other) to heat air or water

USEFUL RESOURCES

RECYC-QUÉBEC (in French and English)

<https://www.recyc-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/entreprises-organismes/performer/economie-circulaire/>

Québec circulaire

<https://www.quebeccirculaire.org/en/index.html>

Vidéo Économie circulaire 101 (RECYC-QUÉBEC)
(in French only) :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXzdxVbs4es>

Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP), 2025

<https://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/developpement/definition.htm>

United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO]
(2020), International Tourism Highlights

<https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422456>

Circle Economy (2021). The Circularity Gap Report — Quebec

<https://www.recyc-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/rapport-indice-circularite-en.pdf>

Espace québécois de concertation sur les pratiques d'approvisionnement responsable (ECPAR) - Rapport pour stimuler l'économie circulaire par l'approvisionnement responsable (in French only)

<https://www.ecpar.org/fr/ressources/Publications/>

Circular Economy Vocabulary (in French only):

<https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/bibliotheque/dictionnaires/vocabulaire-economie-circulaire.aspx>

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