

RCA RECYCLING COUNCIL
OF ALBERTA

Environmental and Social Report

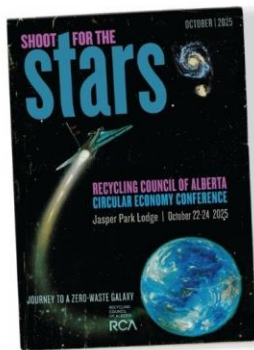
2025 CIRCULAR ECONOMY CONFERENCE
Oct 22-24 | Jasper Park Lodge



Overview

The Recycling Council of Alberta's (RCA) 2025 Circular Economy Conference, Shoot for the Stars, successfully reinforced its position as Western Canada's leading circular economy event, bringing together 379 attendees of which 58 were speakers, including 5 virtual presenters, from across the non-profit, municipal, and industrial value chain. Due to strong demand, venue space was expanded multiple times, ultimately reaching practical capacity—particularly for banquet seating—demonstrating both the growing profile of the conference and the continued interest in the RCA's work.

Conference evaluations reflected strong support for the organization, venue, and programming, while also providing constructive input for future improvements. Out of 96 attendees who completed the survey, the average rating out of 5 (very satisfied to very unsatisfied) for speakers was 4.5 and conference content was 4.4.



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2025 marked the first formal launch of a zero-waste event goal, alongside a strengthened environmental and social focus. The primary goal of the environmental and social committee was to have a zero-waste event, the secondary goal was to advance the circular economy of the conference, and the third goal was to support the community of Jasper in its recovery efforts. The RCA made progress toward measuring and implementing all three goals. The overall diversion rate for the event was calculated at 97%, demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainability and responsible waste management, though recognizing there is still further to go to minimize impacts and bring attendees and site hosts onboard with those plans.



Environmental and Social Key Results in numbers

ZERO-WASTE

390 kg
total waste generated
-1 kg waste per attendee

97%
waste diversion rate



SOCIAL GIVING

18
volunteers

45+ hours
contributing to
Jasper recovery

\$380
donated to
community organizations

Zero Waste and Measurement

The conference implemented a Zero Waste Swag Guideline (ZWAG) (Appendix A) for exhibitors. As well as conducted a waste audit of the conference exhibit and session area to determine the priority areas to focus on at future events.

While the ZWAG guideline was not measured booth by booth, many exhibitors were observed to be in compliance with the policy. Several also reached out in advance to ask how best to follow the guideline, indicating that it influenced decisions regarding free swag giveaways.

Waste Audit Results

The 2025 Recycling Council of Alberta (RCA) Conference, held at the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge (JPL), focused on advancing waste reduction and sustainability initiatives across the conference. To evaluate the environmental performance of the event, the organization had two ways to measure the results.

1. A waste audit was conducted primarily of the materials generated by conference attendees in the exhibit and conference room areas. The primary goal of the audit was to determine the total volume of waste generated, identify the composition of materials, and assess the overall diversion rate from landfill through recycling, composting, and reuse. This will help to identify areas to reduce waste at future events. The link to the full Waste Audit Report is available in Appendix C.
2. The conference team also received a report from Fairmont that outlined the food collected and disposed of in the back of the house (i.e. kitchen) using a technology called Orbisk. *Orbisk uses AI-powered image recognition to measure every gram of waste. With no manual input and no guesswork so operators can save costs and run more profitable kitchens.*

Through the audit, the RCA was able to find out more about the materials and guide staff on how to make sure the use of the Orbisk system and compost options were being properly managed. For example, some back of house items were counted through the audit and these ended up being organics (food from front of house service) that were disposed of by staff in the garbage at the back of house instead of through the Orbisk system.

The event generated a total of 390 kg of waste which amounted to 1 kg of waste per attendee. Of this total waste, 18% or 69 kg was waste sorted from common spaces and was categorized into seven major waste streams: Organics, Landfill, Plastics, Paper, Beverage Containers, Metal, and Reuse materials, and the other 82% or 321 kg was food waste sorted and recorded using Orbisk.

Table 1 shows that organics accounted for 93% of the waste stream generated from our event, followed by recyclable items (plastics, paper, metal and refundables) (3.85%), and a small portion of reusable items (0.04%).

Table 1: Waste generation from the RCA Conference

Category	kg	%
Organics	361.73	92.7%
Recycling	15.03	3.85%
Landfill	13.33	3.41%
Reuse	0.15	0.04%
Total	390	100

A multi-bin system was used in several locations on the conference area and gave the attendees the option to choose landfill, compost or recycling to dispose of their items. The team did not measure contamination at the source of disposal but based on the amount of recycling found in the garbage stream, it can be shared that despite our participants working in the recycling industry, there were still items placed in the incorrect stream.

Measuring Food Waste Through Orbisk

The Fairmont delivered a report about the food waste of the conference from a program called *Orbisk*. The RCA plans to use this conference as a baseline to measure future food loss at events.

The RCA conference planning team also took several other measures to reduce food waste- it adjusted the numbers for meals to reflect general conference attendance (lower numbers on the first and last sessions as well as snack breaks). The team also met with the chefs at the Fairmont to discuss options to design our menu to pay it forward (use food that hadn't been served in upcoming meals) and serve food in single-serve reusable containers to reduce the amount of buffet waste. The report (in Appendix B) highlights the most wasted ingredients, highest cost, highest CO2 and largest production items that were wasted.

The most discarded items were salads at 3.8 g/guest, cauliflower at 3.4 g/guest and cheesecake at 2.2 g/guest. The report also breaks down the highest costs in food loss (based on the cost of the items) and the highest CO2 drivers in food loss. For RCA the highest CO2 drivers were butter (22% or 20 g/CO2e/guest) and salad (13% 11g CO2e/guest).

While results can't compare the efforts of this conference to past events, the RCA can now try to improve on the statistics from this event to continue to encourage host properties to help keep food waste to a minimum.

In the future, Fairmont is working on a CO2 calculator for each menu item, so that conference organizers can make better decisions about the menu when orders are placed and then also understand CO2 generation through food choices. For now, the Fairmont can only report on food categories (e.g. meat) or individual ingredients (e.g. bacon strips).

FOOD WASTE DATA

OCT 21ST – 24TH



Outlet	Total food waste cost	Food waste cost per cover	Total CO2 of food waste	CO2 output per cover
Banquets	\$1,030	\$0.43	500 kg	210 g
Main Kitchen	\$1,344	\$0.62	678 kg	311 g
TOTAL	\$2,374	Avg. \$0.52	1,178 kg	Avg. 258 g

Advancing the circular economy of our conference

The RCA hosted a marketplace for grassroots vendors to advance their circular initiatives and highlighted programs and projects within the program that are making a difference to align to the Circular Economy. The event attracted 15 vendors for the first ever marketplace – items included upcycled textiles to reused soap and sustainable greeting cards.

In addition to the marketplace, wherever possible, reusable items were chosen for the food service. For example, bulk milk and sugar, and steeped tea (so that there were no packages from single-serve items). There were also no single-use items (such as cups or stir sticks or straws) offered to attendees. The RCA chooses the Fairmont to host the event because of their commitment to zero single-use plastics in service and in-room amenities.

Travel

The RCA promoted carpool and shuttle options. While there was not enough interest to run and cover the costs of a private shuttle, 12 guests used the existing Sundog Shuttle. Anecdotally, around 15 guests carpooled (this considers the ones that RCA helped pair up, not knowing about any of the other co-workers or shared transport).

Volunteering

To ensure that the conference invested back into the community, 18 people signed up with Friends of Jasper to contribute a total of over 45 hours of trail clearing with the organization.



Social giving

The RCA donated \$380 (\$1 for every attendee) and this was split amongst the Alex, the RCA, Friends of Jasper and the Jasper Foodbank. Attendees were allowed to “vote” for how to spend their dollar by completing the conference survey.

Lessons learned and future commitments

What worked well

The environmental and social initiatives undertaken by the RCA in 2025 were a solid start to measuring what to manage in the future. The food and menu decisions and travel are likely to have the biggest emissions reduction, though not directly measured, the 2025 conference was a starting point to learn what is possible and this helps to pave the way for future work and growth in this area. We will take this forward to the 2026 project team to build and grow from here, though the recommendation is to keep building in each area.

Areas for improvement

The ZWAG guideline for exhibitors was an area where the team could have done a better job measuring, as opposed to just observing. The RCA can follow up with more volunteer support and implementation for upcoming events and conferences.

Appendices

- A. [ZWAG Guideline](#)
- B. [Orbisk Report](#)
- C. [Waste Audit](#)