

Backgrounder

BC Technology for Learning Society is a registered charity, non-profit organization operating in the Province of British Columbia. We deliver a number of programs:

- Industry Canada’s (ISED) **Computers for Schools Plus Program** and **Connecting Families Initiative**;
- Government of Canada’s **Computers for Schools Intern Program**;
- TELUS’ for *Internet for Good*;
- Tech for Home

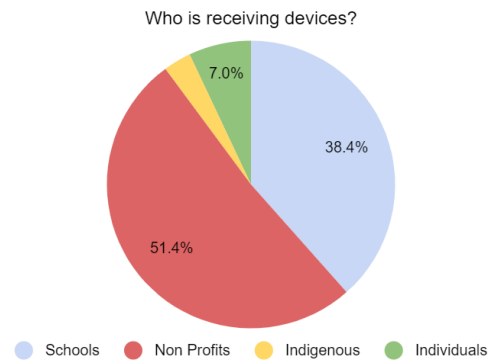
BC Technology for Learning Society is *very* close to reaching a new milestone of **200,000 computers** refurbished and distributed across BC, contributing to a total of 2 million computers and laptops distributed Canada-wide.

Info on Incoming Donations:

- BC Tech receives between 12K -14K donated devices per year
- Key donors include the Federal Government, City of Burnaby, City of Vancouver, Metro Vancouver, TELUS, and local post secondary institutions.

Info on Outgoing Distribution:

- Annual distribution averages 6000 computers per year
- Equipment is provided to BC schools, non profits, Indigenous communities, and individuals
- Metro Vancouver donations have supported local Neighbourhood Houses, Aboriginal Mother Earth Society, Lookout Housing & Health Society, immigrant settlement organizations, Community Radio Education Society, and YWCA Metro Vancouver (to name a few!)



Our mission is *to provide job training for youth and access to refurbished technology for British Columbians*. Our vision is a BC where everyone has equal access to technology and to tools to facilitate learning.

Our thanks to Metro Vancouver for helping make this a reality.

To: Zero Waste Committee

From: Sandra Jansen, General Manager, External Relations
Lucy Duso, Division Manager, External Relations

Date: February 1, 2024 Meeting Date: February 8, 2024

Subject: **Zero Waste Conference 2023**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Zero Waste Committee receive for information the report dated February 1, 2024, titled “Zero Waste Conference 2023”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Zero Waste Conference (the Conference) occurred November 1 and 2, and was, as with previous events, well-received by participants. Hosted by Metro Vancouver, the Conference included international, national, and local speakers and stories, and met its goal of attracting nearly 600 participants. The Conference featured the connections between waste prevention, circular solutions, and a heightened emphasis on climate through the theme of “Climate Action through Circularity”. As requested by past participants, the Conference included an increase in networking opportunities. In response to input from participants and partnering organizations, this report also introduces the Zero Waste Committee to the intention that in future years, Metro Vancouver shifts to delivering the Conference biannually, with the next one in 2025.

PURPOSE

This report provides a summary of the Zero Waste Conference hosted by Metro Vancouver in November 2023 and a look ahead to future Conference delivery.

BACKGROUND

The Zero Waste Conference, hosted by Metro Vancouver supports the first two goals of the Integrated Solid Waste and Resource Management Plan related to waste prevention. The Conference attracts interest from all orders of government, the business sector, sustainability practitioners, academia, and the broader general public within the region and across Canada. The focus, on waste prevention, looks to solutions that are outside of the geographic region of any one region or city, and require national and international system changes.

ZERO WASTE CONFERENCE – A Component of Zero Waste Collaboration Initiatives

The Zero Waste Conference is one component of Metro Vancouver’s Zero Waste Collaboration Initiatives where the other two components are the National Zero Waste Council and Love Food Hate Waste. Each are distinct, but weave together ideas and aligned audiences. The focus on all three is the prevention of waste. The Conference is in its 11th year, and in recent years has expanded from one to two days’ delivery, attracted over 500 participants annually, and connected to speakers and ideas from across the globe.

2023 Program Highlights

As noted to the Committee in the report dated October 12, 2023, “Zero Waste Conference Update”, the 2023 program included both consistent and new components.

Day 1 started with a thoughtful and warm welcome from Tsawwassen First Nation Elder, Ruth Adams. This was followed by a welcome from three governments including the Prime Minister, Premier, and Metro Vancouver Board Chair. A consistent feature from previous years was the Day 1 programming, with a line-up of local and international speakers addressing circular opportunities for urban form, plastics, and textiles. Conference staff put particular focus on attracting youth participants and noted that of the nearly 550 participants, 76 were students. The agenda also included a new feature in the form of table-based conversations for participants, which was highlighted as a very positive experience in participant feedback forms.

Completely new for 2023 were the Day 2 workshops, each addressing a different waste challenge; cities, food, textiles, and consumer habits. These were co-hosted, taking advantage of the strong partnerships among Metro Vancouver, the National Zero Waste Council, and multiple national partners. Workshops used a variety of delivery models such as plenary, table discussions, and a Samoan Circle to engage participants. As with the table-based conversations, feedback from the participant survey indicates these were a highly valued component of the 2023 program.

Day 2 ended for most participants at the end of the workshops at noon. Members of the National Zero Waste Council then re-grouped for the Council AGM. Part of the AGM agenda included a debrief on the Conference, and this group also expressed positive feedback on the new features.

2024 Responding to a Changing Landscape

Metro Vancouver’s Zero Waste Collaboration Initiatives launched in 2012 in support of the then-new Integrated Solid Waste and Resource Management Program. Even in this short history the portfolio has made substantial progress on advancing waste prevention and circular economy concepts locally and nationally and will continue to do so. The Zero Waste Collaboration Initiatives are undergoing a comprehensive review, both reflecting on the successes, but also considering the current landscape, where new organizations have launched in this space, and societal priorities, where climate and emissions are a critical priority. The Zero Waste Committee will receive an update in the March agenda.

For the Conference component, Metro Vancouver will continue to deliver the Zero Waste Conference. Delivery will shift to alternate years, with the next in 2025. This aligns with a network of organizations working in the circular economy sector that attract partially-overlapping audiences. It creates space for these aligned organizations to support one another’s activities rather than compete for attention. This also responds to feedback from participants who, while indicating an ongoing need for Metro Vancouver’s Conference as one of the few places with a Zero Waste focus, also note their own work plans and event calendars have competing activities. Bi-annual (alternating) delivery meets this request. The Zero Waste Conference can be scheduled in consideration for example for events such as Globe Forum or a CELC (Circular Economy Leadership Canada) program. In addition, this opens the opportunity for the team delivering the Conference to

explore new program ideas and continue to offer content that is fresh and directly applicable to current priorities.

ALTERNATIVES

This is an information report. No alternatives are presented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Conference is supported through the 2023 General Government Program of \$212,000 and the remainder through registration fees. There will be substantial savings through shifting to a bi-annual program delivery. Conference-related programming in the non-delivery years will be developed as an annual workplan.

CONCLUSION

The 2023 National Zero Waste Conference was delivered with success and on budget. Participants expressed a very high level of satisfaction. The Conference program included a combination of presentations, audience participation, thought leaders, and networking opportunities. New in 2023 was a workshop series co-delivered among a network of leaders in the zero waste and circular economy landscape. Staff included a focus on youth participation in the promotions, and youth, as future leaders, were a visible portion of the audience. Staff continue to plan for future delivery of the Zero Waste Conference, ensuring content is fresh and current, and scheduling aligns with other organizations in the circular economy landscape. This includes shifting from annual to bi-annual Conference delivery.

REFERENCE

1. Highlights of the 2023 Conference, including video clips of the program speakers can be found at Metro Vancouver's Zero Waste Conference [website](#).