



Circular Economy Consortium (PPG) Tour of York U

YORK UNIVERSITY
MAY 28, 2026

YORK U

The Office of Sustainability

Whole-Institution Approach

Embed sustainability into all aspects of the University:

- Operations: Energy, Food, Green Buildings, Transportation, Procurement, Waste, etc.
- Research
- Teaching & Learning

Awareness, Engagement & Events

Community engagement and programs to inspire and empower action (i.e., Training modules, events & office certification)



@yorkusustainability



sustainability@yorku.ca



@york.university.sustainability



www.yorku.ca/sustainability

Sustainability Governance Priorities

The aim is to embed sustainability into all aspects of the University – operations, teaching and research



Sustainability Policy

A new policy was approved by the Board of Governors Summer 2023



Sustainability Innovation Fund

\$1M funding for sustainability projects



Sustainability Strategy

New strategy released in November 2024



Living Labs

Faculty, staff and students collaborate on projects to support operations, research and teaching



Sustainability Framework

A new action-oriented framework with a steering committee, taskforce and working groups



Awareness, Engagement & Events

Community engagement and programs to inspire and empower action (ie. Training module, events & office certification)

Sustainability Initiatives & Current Activities



Micro-lecture Series in Sustainable Living

A free innovative and interdisciplinary open-access program on a diverse range of topics related to sustainability.



WWF Living Planet Leader @ Campus

Create impact for nature while building your experience and resume with WWF-Canada's Living Planet Leader certification.



Connect with On-Campus Clubs

Meet with like-minded people and participate in campus events.

- Regenesis
- Student Energy at York
- Rethinking Economics YU
- Many Green Hands and Maloca Gardens



Living Labs

Faculty, staff and students collaborate on projects to support operations, research and teaching.



Get Involved with on campus Research Labs

The Circular Innovation Hub and The Ecological Footprint Initiative are on-campus labs that work on real world issues on sustainability, publishing reports and initiating projects.



Sustainability Champions!

Office of Sustainability volunteer, help out with outreach, engagement and event planning to extend our message to students.

Sustainability Strategy Released in November 2024

Answer the call to our university wide challenge by...
Creating Positive Change through:

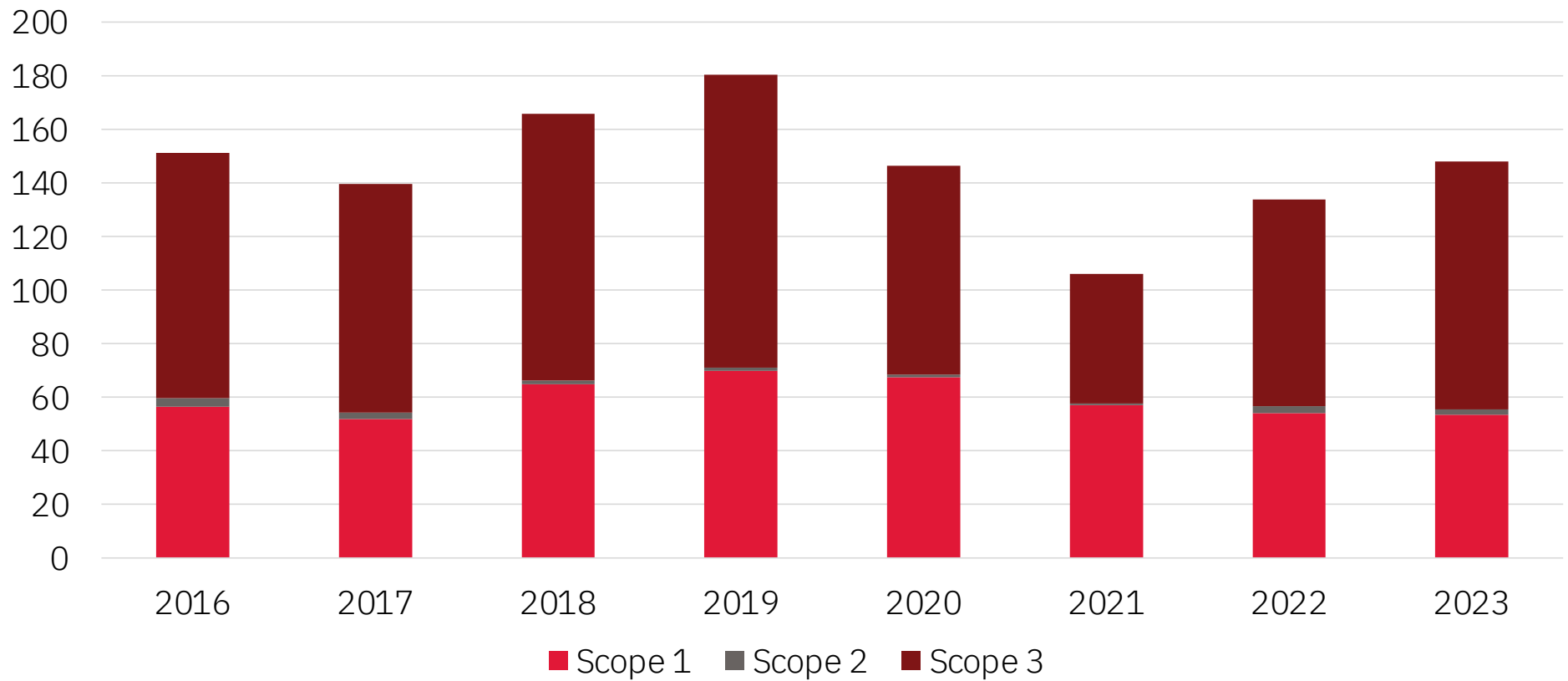
- Leveraging York's strength as the most socially and culturally diverse institution deeply rooted in social and environment justice partnerships, by championing actions that connect people and planet.
- Defining York as a global through leader in sustainability by focusing on preparing students to have impact, research excellence in areas of strength, and creating a living lab for innovation and knowledge mobilization.
- Taking action to make York the most sustainable university that has a positive impact on the local environment while advancing solutions for global challenges and the SDGs.



York's Commitment to Net Zero



Ecological Footprint Report & Scope 1, 2 and 3 Emissions



New Sustainability Framework



Sustainability Strategy – Waste

Strategic Objective

- Aspire to be a zero-waste institution, upholding the principles of circularity and the waste hierarchy (Reduce- Reuse-Recycle+)

Strategic Action

- Develop a waste reduction plan that focuses on waste hierarchy and circularity, with a particular attention to single use plastics and organics.





Waste Working Group

Waste Working Group

Utilize students to conduct ongoing waste audits (significant cost savings)

Offer waste audit certification course to external partners (i.e. PPG)

Use data to support strategic decision making and target specific waste streams for recovery



PARTNERING WITH CIFAL AND UNITAR TO OFFER WASTE AUDIT CERTIFICATION COURSE (TARGETED AT STUDENTS, OPEN TO ANYONE)



PURPOSE: PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH PRACTICAL HANDS ON TRAINING IN HOW TO CONDUCT A WASTE AUDIT (LEADING TO CERTIFICATION UPON COMPLETION)



GOAL: TO LEVERAGE STUDENT WASTE AUDIT TEAM TO CONDUCT WASTE AUDITS ACROSS YORK CAMPUS (TO SUPPORT DIVERSION GOALS AND BUILD A ROBUST DATA SET)



Community Engagement

Sustainability Champions

Who are **Sustainability Champions**?

- Sustainability Champions come from diverse backgrounds and academic disciplines, uniting students (both undergraduate and graduate), staff, and faculty in a common cause. Whether engaged in sustainability through personal passion or professional commitment, all Sustainability Champions share a dedication to fostering a more sustainable future.
- Sustainability Champions are the driving force behind our campus's sustainability initiatives. They actively participate in and lead projects that promote environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic resilience.



Sustainability Streams & Engagement Areas

SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPIONS

Waste Diversion is both an infrastructure and a behavioural challenge. Areas York could continue to improve diversion is batteries, textile, and organic waste. Collection bins and signage need to be complimented by education and engagement.

The Office of Sustainability proposes to build a Waste diversion student team in collaboration with the Circular Innovation Hub in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change to conduct peer to peer engagement strategies at major events, intercepts and in large classrooms settings.

Areas of Focus for Zero Waste Lions:

- › [Circular Innovation Hub](#)
- › [Friendlier](#)
- › [Call2Recycle](#)
- › [Regenesis](#) - Free Store & Borrowing Centre
- › Pilot Reusables Break Café (Funding City of Toronto)



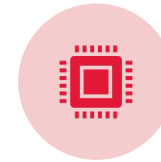
On-Campus Waste Engagement Areas



Carry **reusable items** for everyday use (water bottle, tote bags, Tupperware)



Sort your waste in the right bins.



Repair what's repairable , ex) small holes/rips in clothing , chipped ceramics



Donate old clothes to friends, thrift stores or charities



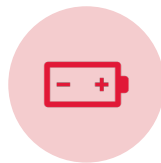
Regenesys Free Store and Borrowing Center



Choose Friendlier Containers for your lunch at the York U Dining Halls.



Be **mindful and realistic** when you go shopping



Dispose of your batteries in the **Call2Recycle** bins on campus.



Advocate for correct waste disposal and recycling practices!

Regenesi



 @regenesisyork

Circular Innovation Hub



CIRCULAR INNOVATION HUB – A LIVING LAB ON CAMPUS

Operating as a **Living Lab**, the Hub translates empirical research into practical, real-world solutions.

Material and Technological Agnosticism: We evaluate materials objectively through their systemic lifecycle impacts, prioritizing empirical data over popular narratives.

Collaborative Networks: We connect academic researchers, industry partners, and public sector agencies to build systems of material transparency.

Experiential Learning: We provide students at York University with opportunities to lead applied research and engage directly with global partners.

Canada's leading research initiative driving evidence-based decision making to advance the circular economy, sustainable waste management, and resource circularity.

What do we do?

- **Behavioral Research:** Understanding what drives diversion behaviors, with a specific emphasis on understanding sociodemographic drivers of behavioral antecedents. This includes encouraging pro environmental behavior among minority and marginalized groups
- **Policy and Legislative Guidance:** Providing guidance on optimal policy design, and understanding the impacts of our decisions (EPR, recycled content requirements, single use plastic bans etc.)
- **Life Cycle Analysis:** Understanding and modeling the impacts of products and systems. This includes the development of an expanded LCA framework that includes social and economic dimensions.
- **Product and Systems Design:** Creating products and systems to advance the circular economy and promote true sustainability (e.g. Material substation analysis)

Selected Projects/Initiatives



Open Data Standard For Plastics: Developed the open data standard for plastics for ECCC. Standard will be used for the federal plastics registry



Best Practices in Public Space Recycling: Understanding optimal bin placement/density/design and consumer behavior



Best Practices in Stopping Illegal Dumping: Outlines data-driven mitigation strategies and actionable policy frameworks to combat illegal dumping in urban environments



Standardized LCA Tools: Waste Audit LCA Dashboard

Bennet Toman RA Presentation



RA Deliverables

- 1) Sustainable events recommendations educational document
- 2) Infographic for dissemination
- 3) Presentation for external stakeholders

Background and Importance of Sustainable Events

- **Waste reduction and diversion:** sustainable waste management streams, improvements in widespread education and awareness, increased diversion rates and reincorporation of food wastes.
- **Food waste and Food insecurity:** food donation and recovery partnerships, food redistribution strategies, and plant-forward solutions.
- **Emissions:** Reduce emissions associated with the catering of events, energy use, and eco-friendly procurement and operational guidelines.
- **Governance:** implement sustainability solutions and expectations into event planning processes and to involve the Office of Sustainability and their pledges and policies to move it from voluntary to consistent standards.

How Events are conducted

Catering of events
is decentralized

Reception style
events

Follow standard
procedures and
have waste
streams close by

Charcuterie
boards and finger
foods as options
at these events

Pre-survey on
sustainability
through Office of
Sustainability

Statistics and Importance of food waste and insecurity



Food insecurity is a growing concern across campuses



Waste Not 2.0 Tracker available for best waste management practices



Food insecurity connected to attitudes and behaviors of food costs, accessibility, and quality of nutritious foods on campus



Recommendations

- Add more plant-based options on meals and into menus (60%+)
- Avoidable food wastes reintegrated into catered event meals (40-50%)
- Compost bins available in kitchenettes and on dining tables
- Waste bins and sorting bins (tri or quad bins) placed within event spaces
- Where possible, use of China or porcelain materials for food dining
- Use reusable containers where possible (such as Friendlier)
- Where possible, washable and reusable napkins (instead of ones that are thrown away)
- Events held outside when the weather is permitted- reduction of lighting and cooling/energy savings
- Sustainable events survey at completion of the events to continually update and improve the sustainability of events
- Trolleys or food stations post events to have members stop by or be given out to reduce food security

Next Steps

- Incorporate a post survey on sustainability initiatives that have been achieved to document what is working and how the event can be improved in the future
- Disseminate the information compiled from the RA work to internal and external stakeholders to York to begin implementing
- Update the information on the Office of Sustainability Website and have Sustainability Champions involved at events to spread the message
- Work with both the Circular Innovation Hub and the Office of Sustainability and update required information and provide educational days to all community members of York

Experiences



SUSTAINABILITY
CHAMPIONS PROGRAM
WITH THE OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY



CIRCULAR INNOVATION
HUB



INTERNSHIPS



HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES



RESEARCH ASSISTANT
CONTRACTS



DEVELOP PAPERS AND HELP
WITH RESEARCH





Erica Garber

Who I Am

- Second Year for Cities, Regions, Planning
- Sustainability Champion
- Dean's Changemaker for the Circular Innovation Hub



DISCOVER
**Cities, Regions,
Planning (BES)**

environmental & urban change | **YORK U**

What I do

- Working with SGP on research projects:
 - Creating a map of recycling locations across Canada and U.S.
 - Update certification requirements
- Creating a plastic education campaign on social media:
 - Teaching youth plastic is everywhere
- Attending an Earth Charter Youth Summit in California

