# Trellis Group annual meeting highlights optimism and challenges in circular economy



At the recent annual gathering of circular economy professionals hosted by Trellis Group, a day of discourse underscored by optimism, pragmatism, and realism unfolded before attendees. The event, held on April 29, featured a series of insightful talks and panels focusing on the advancement of circular economy principles across various sectors.

Steven Bethell, president of Ottawa-based Bank & Vogue, kicked off with an emphatic endorsement of the circular economy’s potential for economic growth. He shared that in the past five years, his company had doubled the volume of used textiles collected from charities and private donors for recycling. "I’m drunk on the idea of circularity being a job creator not just locally but globally," Bethell expressed, highlighting the burgeoning opportunities within this economic model.

Following this, Alice Havill, founding partner at Fractal Climate, presented a tutorial themed “Lessons from Colorado: A Proven Model for the Circular Economy.” Havill emphasised the value of building in-state and regional circular systems. “If you want manufacturing in your state, what better way to start than with feedstock that’s already available in your state?” she noted, discussing how circularity fosters local economic development and job creation.

The event also featured a keynote address from Lyla June, an Indigenous musician, author, and community organiser. June challenged conventional ideas about progress, stating, “It’s a false idea that anything in the past was automatically more primitive. I don’t know that we’ve ever been more primitive as we are today.” She suggested that Indigenous cultural knowledge holds valuable lessons for implementing circular principles today.

Eric Davis, CEO and founder of Colorado-based Pretred, shared his company’s journey of recycling used tyres into highway blocks and barriers. He recounted initial optimism when the head of the Colorado Department of Transportation expressed strong support for their products but acknowledged the complexities of turning circular economy ideas into business realities: “It turns out it wasn’t that simple.”

John Warner, president and CEO of The Technology Greenhouse and a pioneer in green chemistry, focused his keynote on the need to rethink sustainability from a broad perspective. He stressed that "Ninety percent of the technologies we need for a circular economy haven’t been invented yet," and underlined the critical role of diversity and inclusion in fostering these innovations. Warner also highlighted the disconnect in current chemistry education, noting most chemists are not trained to consider the circularity of materials, though he praised initiatives like the nonprofit Beyond Benign, which promotes green chemistry curriculum and has been adopted by 240 universities.

Lauren Dunteman, senior associate of regenerative supply at Terra Genesis International, provided insights into regenerative agriculture, describing it as “a process and a set of principles—both of those being quite holistic in nature—to focus on livelihoods, the well-being of communities and a variety of different environmental outcomes, as opposed to specifically looking at just carbon or just soil.” Her perspective outlined the wide-ranging impacts of this agricultural model.

Jaden Barney, senior sustainability analyst at Legrand, illustrated practical design improvements to reduce waste, sharing how his company eliminated single-use plastic packaging for an outlet cover by incorporating screw insets within the product itself, demonstrating early-stage influence on product attributes before even reaching the engineering phase.

Peter Whitcomb, CEO of TERSUS Solutions, spotlighted his company’s innovative approach to garment cleaning using captured CO2 instead of traditional water and chemical methods. Last year, TERSUS saved approximately 5 million gallons of water and diverted 1.5 million garments from landfills. Whitcomb described the future challenge as “killing drycleaning and water-based cleaning.”

The gathering concluded with William McDonough, CEO of McDonough Innovation and renowned author of the 2002 work *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, sharing a critical view on current sustainability language. He said, “Less bad is still not good. It’s by definition bad. This whole pursuit of ‘net zero,’ it’s just more strange language for the kids. Do you send your kids out in the morning and say, ‘Try to be less bad today’?”

The Trellis Group’s annual meeting thus offered a comprehensive snapshot of the circular economy landscape today, ranging from theoretical paradigms to actionable business innovations, underscored by calls for creativity, inclusivity, and practical solutions. The event revealed a complex but promising path forward for transforming how resources are managed and renewed.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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