

**2023.01      Combating Textile Waste in Canada**

**Resolved,** that national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 103<sup>rd</sup> national annual meeting of members assembled, urge the federal government to establish new programs and to expand established subsidies aimed at reducing textile waste in Canada.

## **Brief            Combating Textile Waste in Canada**

It is estimated that 176,343 tonnes of textile waste in Canada are disposed of annually (Weber, 1). “Good Samaritans flood noble ventures, including the Salvation Army Thrift Stores and Goodwill Services, with their worn textiles... [yet] only a fraction of the donated items will find their way onto other people’s backs, while another minuscule sum replenishes the country’s supply of polishing cloths and carpet fibres. Most of the time, the used garments are landfilled” (Gray). Gray further states, “For context, landfilling claims 85% of the wearable textiles and 99% of non-wearable ones, such as shoes and towels. Donations that are packaged in bulk and either sold in local thrift shops or abroad are usually of poor quality and are promptly thrown out.” The federal government can play a more active role in this issue by expanding established subsidies aimed at reducing textile waste in Canada.

“Approximately 93% of plastic textile waste ends up in landfills” (Canada, Canadian). Although there is limited collection and recycling of textiles, Drennan states, “There is enough material to feed multiple textile recycling facilities in Canada, if the material can first be separated from the waste stream, and if there are sufficient recycling opportunities available in Canada.”

“The fashion industry... contributes to around 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions due to its long supply chains and energy intensive production” (UN). A report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation cautions that without change, the industry “could use more than 26% of the carbon budget” by 2050. Textile waste also affects water systems as synthetic textiles produce 35% of all microplastics in the ocean (These). These factors, including textiles in landfills, make the fashion industry a significant global polluter.

“In 2018, 58,895 tonnes of textile waste were diverted from going to landfills and incinerators” (Unravelling). There has been a move towards greater sustainability in Canada. Vancouver-based Textile Lab for Circularity “developed a proven method for collaboration, pooling [research and development] costs, accessing economies of scale and building the fabric of connections necessary to make circular fashion business models mainstream practice” (Thorlakson). Federal government initiatives such as fostering sustainability by assisting companies with monetary or tax-based incentives and promoting broader based and better textile recycling systems would help Canada fulfil its commitment to reducing carbon emissions. A recent study looked at incorporating a graded labelling system to improve the process of textile recycling (Weber, 8-9). In March 2021, three Canadian based companies received up to \$150,000 to further develop various ways to address plastic textile waste: CACITH Inc., Met-Tech Inc. and Singular Solutions Inc. (Canada, Government).

Textile waste is a concern in Canada. Various textile industry and waste reduction companies have been working on creating solutions to address plastic textile waste. Waste reduction and management responsibilities are shared between the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments. A Canadian feasibility study offers many recommendations to address textile waste by all levels of government (Drennan). We urge the federal government to expand established subsidies to combat textile waste in Canada.

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### **Action Plan: Combating Textile Waste in Canada**

1. Raise awareness that could include inviting speakers, offering informative videos, holding workshops and providing resources to members, parishioners and community at large.
2. Write letters to the prime minister and minister of environment and climate change, with copies to local members of parliament urging the federal government to expand established subsidies aimed at reducing textile waste in Canada.
3. Encourage members to participate in the annual federal Waste Reduction Week in Canada.
4. Monitor the federal government's response to the resolution.