

# Better practices in municipal textile diversion: Experiences to date

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# The Issue

- Originally a paucity of data, particularly in a Canadian context
- How much is being generated, recovered, sent to landfill
- Little data regarding cost of managing used textiles



# The Issue Cont'

- Managing used textiles is a growing concern for municipalities
- Generated in significant quantities (~3 billion pounds of used textiles annually)
- Low recycling rates (20%)
- Municipalities have traditionally omitted textiles from their waste diversion programs



## Diabetes Canada & York U National Textile Study

- Canada's first study regarding the management of used textiles
  - Study Objectives:
    - Get a better sense of the quantities of used textiles being generated and recovered nationally
    - Encourage textile diversion through strategic partnerships with municipalities and other stakeholders
    - Identify socio-economic and socio-demographic drivers that affect public participation in textile diversion programs
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## Diabetes Canada & York U National Textile Study Cont'

- Study Objectives Continued:
  - Identify optimal placement for used clothing collection points
  - Understand the economic, social and environmental impacts of textile diversion
  - Create a best practices guide for municipalities developing a used textile program



## Diabetes Canada & York U National Textile Study Cont'

- Partner with municipalities and other stakeholders in piloting the study
- Diabetes Canada will place and service bins, collecting data regarding material being recovered
- That data will be submitted to the university, who will conduct “back end” analysis:
  - Model LCA impacts
  - Overlay collection data with community level statistics such as household income/education etc
  - Generate feedback reports to municipal partners communicating the impact of used clothing bins

## Diabetes Canada & York U National Textile Study Findings

- Diabetes Canada and York University have created partnerships with over 182 municipalities across Canada
- To date, this program has diverted in excess of 50 millions pounds of textiles from landfill
- Municipally branded bins divert twice as much material when compared to non branded binds
- The success of a used textile program is largely contingent on reducing consumer uncertainty.



# Household attitudes towards textile diversion: Cognitive Dissonance

- Significant concerns expressed over the “intention” of clothing collection bins
- Households are significantly concerned about where their material is going (“Is it a scam?” “Is it really being recycled”, “I heard from a friend that they just resell these clothes”
- Cognitive dissonance (Where positive intention is negated by an uncertain outcome) deters households from participating
- “I would rather throw it in the dump, because at least I know where it goes”

## Why does municipal branding work?

- Official recognition → Reduces household uncertainty → Reduces cognitive dissonance → Increased diversion of textiles from landfill
- Remove the “stigma” associated with textile diversion – “Weed out the bad apples”
- Reinforces both authoritative (municipal) and altruistic motivations (charitable). The “halo” effect.

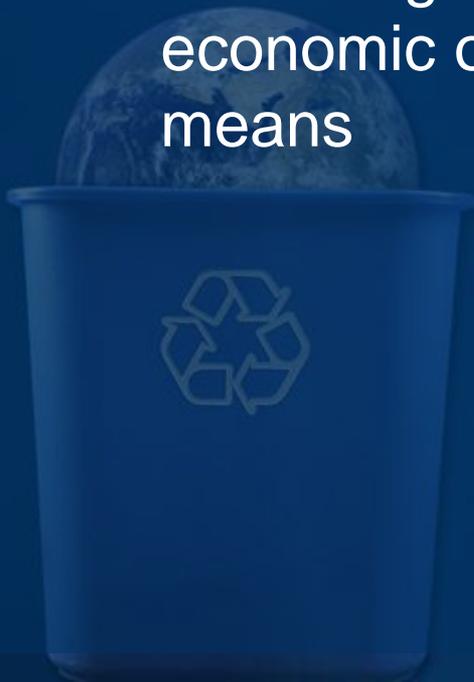


## Benefits of the Study

- Municipalities recognize that used textiles are a significant challenge, and don't know what to do about it
- Diabetes Canada has the requisite collection and processing infrastructure to meet the needs of municipalities
- York University is able to provide credible and neutral data analytics to encourage municipalities to partner with Diabetes Canada in lieu of alternative collection schemes
- Key outcome: Better data, increased diversion, greater social impact

## Not just about Diabetes Canada or textiles

- Alternative model of service delivery (not just a municipal responsibility)
- Can a charity/not for profit actor play a role in municipal waste management?
- Achieving optimal social, environmental and economic outcomes through non conventional means



# Questions?

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