When Waste Has Value,
It Stops Being Waste

Sustainability Community Breakfast
Reducing Textile Waste in the Region
32 Years of Textile Recycling

1986 – Rokit, London, UK
Market stalls, wholesaling of imported clothing, retail stores, African export

1990 – Surrey, BC
Warehouse - reliable supply for retail stores and export clothing market
Where does it come from?
What do you take?
What do you do with it all?
Where does it come from?

- Local, Out-of-Province and US Thrift stores
- Clothing Banks – partnerships with non-profits and charities
  - 18 years, 220 bins, 35 partners
  - Raised millions of dollars for our local community
- Industry
  - Commercial laundries, overruns, branded promotional materials, etc.
- Clothing drives – schools, sports teams, community groups, etc.
What do you take? What can’t I give you?

Garbage?

Recycle? — Thrift store or clothing bin
Give everything away in good conscience!

• There is a market for it**
• Volume matters
• We can maximize value
• We can minimize waste

Our Waste is currently 1.5%

**Not wet, mouldy or toxic. No broken shoes.

TCTR, Surrey BC
What do we do with it and where does it go?

Reuse
- Sort and grade for specific markets for reuse
- Approximately 360 categories
- Market: Mostly export

Wiping cloth market
- High cotton content, too damaged to be worn again
- Cut into approx. 30 categories of material
- Market: 2 million pounds per year to local and export

Recycling market
- Separation into approx. 8 categories
  - e.g., Woollens, acrylics, cottons, polyesters
- Market: Exported to specific mills for recycling into “new” fibres
- Uses range from high end recycling of valuable fibres into new clothing to the recycling of low grade materials for insulation, sound-proofing, road substrate, etc.

TCTR, Surrey BC
Now what? Key Challenges

Fast fashion

Purchasing habits

Change in material mixes

- High volume
- Low quality
- Low value
- Mixed materials

Most of our recycling product is now of a lower grade, competing in an oversubscribed market.
Local Opportunities

Recycle all apparel and household textiles

• We have the capacity to deal with it locally and keep it out of the waste stream

SORTBC

• Handles 75 million pounds annually
• Researching environmentally friendly and cost-effective solutions

TCTR Surrey, BC
Conclusion

Donate Everything
A model where the public is encouraged to donate/recycle all textile items creates the most value locally and internationally.

Support Local Recycling Industry
There is proven local capacity to sort, redirect and recycle donated textile items. The six Lower Mainland textile recyclers have the capacity to handle significant increases in volume of donated items.

We create easy textile recycling solutions for the general public and business