

THE STORY OF TEXTILES

THEN → NOW → FUTURE

THEN

EARLY PRODUCTION OF TEXTILES

1666

The first Canadian census reveals 20 shoemakers serve a population of 3,215 inhabitants.

1738

The world's first machine to spin cotton into thread is invented.

1784

The Power Loom, the first machine to weave threads into cloth, is patented.

1800

Women's and men's shoes began to differ from one another in style, colour, heel, and toe shape. Cloth-topped shoes made an appearance during this era, and boots grow exceedingly popular.

1846

The first sewing machine is patented.

1850-1900

Mass production of clothing in Canada begins in urban centres. Textiles production picks up speed through the innovation of new textile machines and factories, allowing businesses to produce clothing in bulk.

1871

Canadian census reports 4,191 footwear-manufacturing establishments in Canada. Most are small shops that also undertake repair, but with advent of mechanized shoe making equipment, many of these small manufacturers were forced out of business by the high capital cost of machinery and plant construction.

1868

Men's fine clothing company Livingstone and Johnston (later to become a subsidiary of Tip Top Tailors) is established in Toronto.

1873

Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss invent denim jeans, which are named after the city of Genoa in Italy, a place where cotton corduroy, called either jean or jeane, was manufactured.

1897

Salvation Army's first thrift store launches out of the basement of a men's shelter.

1883

A patent for an automatic method for lasting shoes paves the way for the mass production of affordable shoes.

1917

As part of a sales campaign for Keds shoes an advertising agency coins the sneaker to connote the quiet, stealthy nature of rubber-soled shoes.

1920

Goodwill is founded in Boston by Rev. Edgar J. Helms, who collects used household goods and clothing in wealthy areas of the city, then trains and hires those who were poor to mend and repair the used goods for resale.

1934

Clothing production becomes more standardized and commercially produced because of style and functionality requirements for World War II uniforms.

1933-1945

During the Great Depression and World War II, demand for thrift stores and used clothing outweighs supply as more people cannot afford to part with their belongings and buy new ones.

Women's shoes are becoming more arched, sophisticated, and made to highlight the foot. Delicate heels grew narrower as the decade progresses. Salvatore Ferragamo rises to fame by experimenting with unusual materials for footwear, including kangaroo, crocodile, and fish skin.

THEN

THE RISE OF TEXTILE PRODUCTION AND FAST FASHION

1940

Rayon, the first manufactured fibre that can mimic silk, linen, cotton, and wool qualities at a fraction of the cost, is brought to market, as well as polyester.

1938

Nylon, the world's first synthetic fibre is invented by DuPont scientists after 11 years of research, and first used in women's stockings and hosiery.

1949

Stockings and hosiery, historically made with silk, are now primarily made with nylon and other synthetic fibres.

1950s

Consignment and vintage shops selling used clothing begin to emerge and cater to a high-end clientele. 292 footwear factories in Canada produce 33.9 million pairs of shoes annually, valued at \$111 million, employing 20,785 workers.

1956

Washing machine sales more than triple as more consumers can afford to expand their wardrobes and clothing can be easily washed at home.

1954

Value Village opens its first thrift shop in San Francisco's Mission District.

1958

The synthetic Spandex is brought to market.

1960s-1970s

Fashion trends begin increasing at rapid speeds, requiring fashion brands to find ways to keep up with demand for affordable clothing.

1972

Diane von Furstenberg launches her signature knit jersey wrap dress. By 1976, more than 5 million wrap dresses are sold.

1968

Shoe production in Canada reaches a peak of 52.9 million pairs made annually.

1980s

Clothing industries enters a new phase of technology. Computer-controlled equipment and robotics are rapidly introduced into factories.

1985

Diabetes Canada and Value Village form a partnership to divert clothing and household goods from landfill through reuse. The partnership collects and diverts approximately 45 million kg (100 million lbs) of donated items per year.

1986

75 million pairs of shoes are imported into Canada compared to 6.8 million pairs in 1972.

1985

Across Canada there are 169 factories employing 14,164 persons producing 43 million pairs of footwear valued at \$870 million.

1990s

In response to Spanish retailer Zara arriving in New York City, The New York Times coins the term fast fashion to describe the retailer's mission to take only 15 days for a garment to go from design stage to being sold in stores.

1990s

Tariffs on textiles are reduced through NAFTA and The Uruguay Round Agreement on Textiles and Clothing which presents opportunities for fashion industry to move production overseas.

1992

\$2.9 billion of apparel is imported into Canada.

1997

\$4 billion of apparel is imported to Canada, a 37% increase since 1992.

1994

The apparel industry contributes 2.2% of Canada's manufacturing gross domestic product (GDP) and accounts for 5.7% of total manufacturing employment.

2001

Waste Reduction Week in Canada is launched by Recycling Council of Ontario and a coalition of not-for-profit, environmental groups and governments from each provincial and territorial jurisdictions in Canada.

2013

The average North American consumer purchases 64 garments per year—about five per month.

2014

Global textile production doubles since the year 2000.

NOW

GROWING CONCERNS OF TEXTILES WASTE AND FAST FASHION

2015

Fashion Revolution, a global movement of industry workers, launches Fashion Transparency Index to rate the world's largest fashion retailers based on their social and environmental policies, practices, and impacts in their operations and supply chain.

2015

A study estimates that 83 million tonnes of waste was created by the global fashion industry in 2015 and at this rate it will increase by 62% to 134 million tonnes by 2030.

2015

Globally, customers mis out on \$460 billion of value each year by throwing away clothes that they could continue to wear.

2016

Canada exports more than \$160 million worth of used textiles globally, with \$22 million of it going to Kenya.

2016

Swedish brand H&M collects 14,500 tonnes of discarded clothing using an incentive of a \$6 store voucher for every bag delivered by customers. It also pledges to use all recycled or sustainably sourced materials by 2030, setting an annual collection target of 23,000 tonnes of disposed clothes.

2016

Study from University of Plymouth, UK reveals that the average load of laundry releases 700,000 microplastic fibres into the water.

2017

2,600 litres of water are needed to produce the average T-shirt. The fashion industry is estimated to be worth \$3 trillion annually and employs 57 million people worldwide.

2017

City of Markham becomes the first municipality in North America to ban textile waste at the curb, providing public access locations and 63 multi-residential properties.

2017

Less than 1% of material used to produce clothing and textiles is recycled.

2017

Waste Reduction Week in Canada introduces daily themes for the week-long campaign, with Tuesday placing spotlight on the issue of Textiles.

2017

Adidas partners with Parley on a line of shoes using Primeblue, a post-consumer recycled material made of recycled ocean plastic waste.

2017

The fashion industry is valued at \$31 trillion, employing more than 300 million people globally.

2018

50% of our clothing is made with synthetic fibres, accounting for 35% of global microplastic pollution.

2018

Canadians on average buy 70 new articles of clothing a year, contributing to 12 million tonnes a year of textile waste being sent North American landfills.

2019

Textiles in Canada account for 7% of all plastics in landfills.

2019

Consumers around the world buy an estimated 14.5 billion to 19 billion pairs of shoes per year – roughly equal to two pairs per person on the planet.

2020

The textiles industry consumes an estimated 215 trillion litres of water per year, polluting the water system with chemicals, detergents, and microfibres.

2020

France passes legislation that as of January 2025, all new washing machines in France must include a filter to stop synthetic clothes from releasing microfibres.

2021

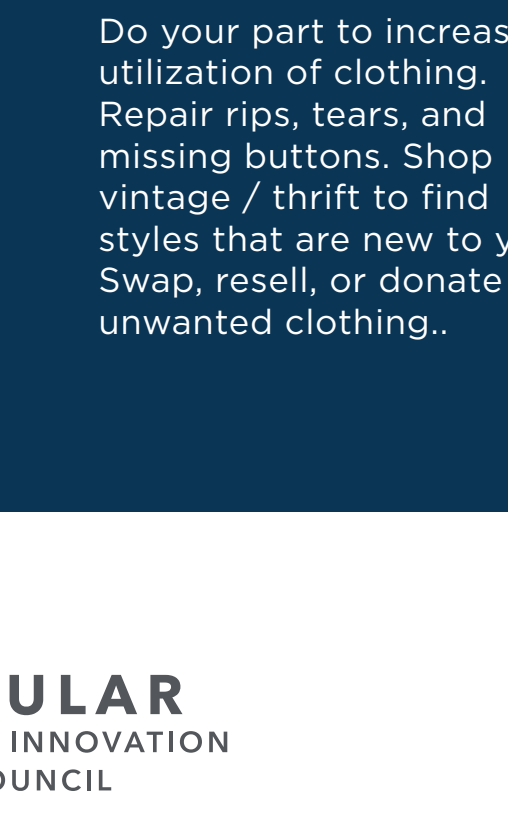
Only 14% of polyester inputs are from recycled materials, and feedstock mainly comes from PET plastic bottles instead of textiles.

2021

Clothing use has declined by approximately 40% since the early 2000s.

2021

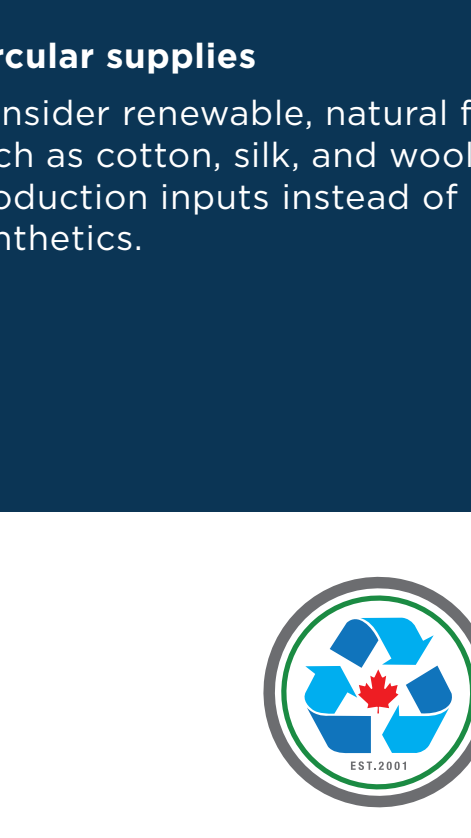
The average person buys 60% more clothing than past generations.



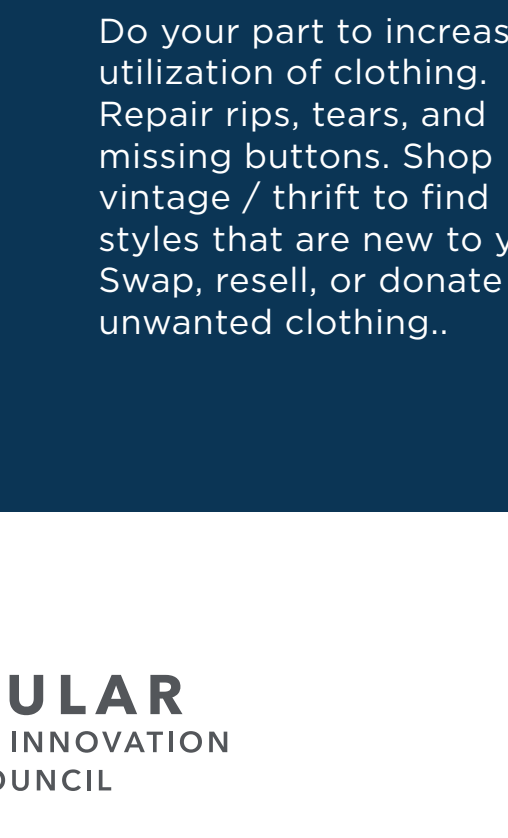
Product life extension
Do your part to increase utilization of clothing. Repair rips, tears, and missing buttons. Shop vintage / thrift to find styles that are new to you. Swap, resell, or donate unwanted clothing.



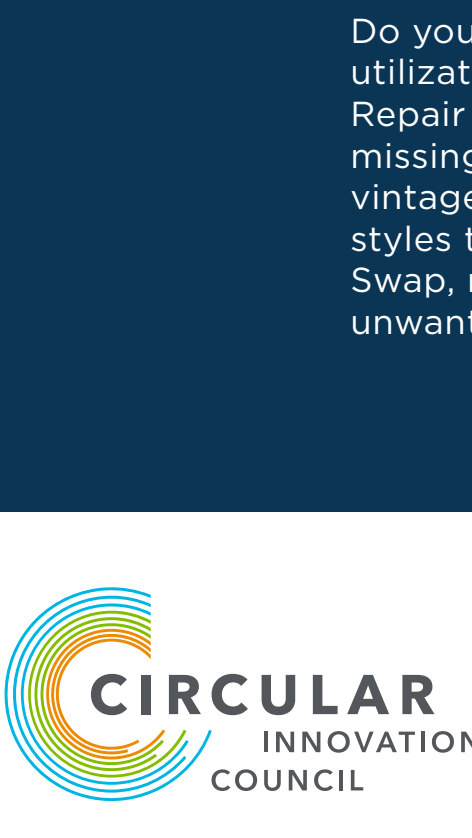
Resource recovery
Invest and scale recycling infrastructure to recover materials used in textile production.



Reduce pollution
Eliminate inputs that pollute our waterways with dyes and microfibres and are toxic substances for workers and communities.



Sharing platform
Clothing subscription and rental services help foster a circular economy by keeping materials in use longer amongst many users.



WASTE REDUCTION WEEK IN CANADA