

Environment and Climate Change Canada

Place Vincent Massey, 9th Floor

351 St. Joseph Boulevard

Gatineau Quebec K1A 0H3

Submitted by Email: plastiques-plastics@ec.gc.ca

RE: Consultation Addressing Plastic Waste and Pollution from the Textile and Apparel Sector

On behalf of TRSA – The Linen, Uniform and Facility Services Association, we are pleased to provide comments on the consultation on the development of a roadmap to address plastic waste and pollution from the textile and apparel sector.

TRSA represents over 140 locations across Canada, employing over 11,000 people, that supply, launder and maintain linens and uniforms, including critical infrastructure businesses that enable the healthcare and other essential sectors to safely operate.

TRSA (trsa.org) members help healthcare facilities, hotels, restaurants, retailers, government entities (e.g., first responders, public utilities, infrastructure maintenance operations), and other organizations enhance their image and provide clean and safe environments for employees and customers. TRSA members are proud of the industry's environmental stewardship and circular economy as recyclers that use highly efficient, water- and energy-saving technology to maintain, process and recycle reusable textiles. TRSA members process nearly 90 percent of all commercially laundered linens, uniforms, garments, and other reusable textiles in North America, positively impacting the comfort, safety, and image of millions of individuals, businesses and other organizations every day.

During the pandemic, TRSA members were designated as critical infrastructure operations for their essential role in providing clean and safe reusable textiles to the healthcare and other necessary industries. The reusable textiles that TRSA members supply, maintain and reprocess promote supply chain stability and a circular textile economy, in addition to their safety and cost-savings benefits.

As we collectively strive to reduce the environmental impacts of our industries, it is crucial to recognize the significant role that textile rental services can play in promoting sustainability and reducing plastic waste.

The textile rental industry offers a sustainable alternative to the traditional model of textile consumption, which often involves the frequent purchase and disposal of garments and other textile products. By providing high-quality, durable textiles that are designed for repeated use, rental services help to extend the lifecycle of these products, thereby reducing the demand for new textiles and the associated environmental impacts of their production.

One of the key environmental benefits of the textile rental industry is its potential to significantly reduce plastic waste. Many textiles, particularly those used in the apparel sector, contain synthetic fibers such as polyester, nylon, and acrylic, which are derived from petroleum-based plastics. When these textiles are discarded, they contribute to the growing problem of plastic pollution, as synthetic fibers can take hundreds of years to decompose and often release microplastics into the environment.

By contrast, textile rental services prioritize the maintenance and reuse of textiles, thereby minimizing the need for new synthetic fibers and reducing the overall volume of plastic waste. Additionally, rental companies often

implement rigorous quality control and cleaning processes to ensure that textiles remain in good condition for as long as possible, further extending the useful life and reducing waste.

Moreover, the textile rental industry is well-positioned to adopt and promote circular economy principles. Many rental companies already have systems in place for the collection, cleaning, and redistribution of textiles, which can be leveraged to support recycling and upcycling initiatives. For example, textiles that are no longer suitable for rental can be repurposed into new products or recycled into raw materials for the production of new products such as insulation and other textiles, thereby closing the loop and reducing the need for virgin materials.

Another benefit of the textile rental industry is the significant investment companies make to develop and implement the best available technologies to filter microplastics out of the wastewater stream such as shaker screens and dissolved air flotation systems. These systems mitigate microplastics in the environment.

Due to the significant investment the linen, uniform and facility services industry dedicates to promoting sustainability and a circular economy, the industry asks that Environment and Climate Change Canada recognize the importance textile rental companies have in protecting the environment and ensure the industry has a voice as it moves down the path of addressing plastic waste and pollution from the textile and apparel sector.

In conclusion, the textile rental industry offers a viable and sustainable solution to the challenges of plastic waste and pollution in the textile and apparel sector. By supporting and promoting the growth of this industry, Environment and Climate Change Canada can help to drive positive environmental outcomes and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Thank you for considering the perspective of the linen, uniform and facility services industry on this important issue. The industry looks forward to being a productive partner in developing and implementing effective strategies to address plastic waste and pollution in the textile and apparel sector. We would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions or provide further insight into our industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin D. Schwalb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin D. Schwalb
Vice President

TRSA – The Linen, Uniform and Facility Services Association