

Recycling at Air Canada is about more than just paper and aluminum cans



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Air Canada is committed to leaving less of an impact on the environment and do more in the communities we serve by reducing the amount of waste from operations.

However, the commitment goes much deeper than simply recuperating and recycling items from the hundreds of flights we operate daily.

When we announced new uniforms for our employees in 2017, we had many unused items in our old colours and we needed to ensure that the uniforms were disposed in a way that minimized the environmental impact while giving them a second life.

“In Canada, there is a focus on ensuring businesses are taking responsibility for the waste they create. At Air Canada, we wanted to ensure that we were taking responsibility for recycling the uniforms from both a brand security and an environmental standpoint,” said Chelsea Quirke, Manager, Environmental Management Waste Programs at Air Canada.

The goal of Air Canada’s Corporate Waste Strategy is to reduce waste sent to landfill by 20 per cent by 2020. The uniform recycling program has allowed Air Canada to divert approximately 240 tonnes of items from landfill, or just under the equivalent weight of 2 empty 787-9 Dreamliners.

Air Canada is working with several organizations who re-purpose, recycle or reuse our surplus and used uniforms.

One of several projects we have engaged in is a collaboration with non-profit organization Brands for Canada. Its mission is to ensure Canadians living below the poverty line have access to proper clothing and other essentials necessary for a dignified and prosperous life. Air Canada is donating approximately 50,000 surplus items to support Brands for Canada in their mission, the majority being wardrobe staples such as blazers, skirts, pants, blouses and shirts.

Making textiles is a resource-intensive process; That T-Shirt you are wearing required the equivalent of 27 bathtubs of water

and involves chemicals and dyes that can leach into the environment.

“Brands For Canada is extremely excited about our new program with Air Canada. This exceptional donation of new blankets, coats, work wear and business attire will provide invaluable care packages to help support thousands of Canadian families living below the poverty line,” said Helen Harakas, Executive Director of Brands for Canada.

Once the items are delivered to Brands for Canada, all Air Canada branding and logos are removed using a variety of techniques, from label cutting to embroidering over branding. Brands for Canada then distributes the unbranded clothing to charitable causes including individuals re-entering the workforce, those without the means to purchase new clothes, and students hoping to begin their professional careers.

Our pilot uniforms were given new purpose by Viking Recycling in Toronto. The company removed all branding and decorative elements from the uniforms then shredded the textiles. The resulting material was used to stuff punching bags, which were donated to community centres in the Toronto area. The punching bags are also hung with used Air Canada Cargo straps.

Other organizations helped us in processing the used uniforms from employees across Canada. Debrand shreds the textiles, guaranteeing brand security, and reuses the resulting ‘shoddy’ for things like automotive stuffing or insulation. Where reuse isn’t possible, a portion of our uniforms also went to ‘energy from waste’, a process where the recovered thermal energy is converted to electricity and steam.

Other initiatives included donating our business class duvets to Syrian refugees between 2016 and 2017. To date: 11,880 duvets have been donated, equivalent to 16.15 tonnes of material. We have also donated over 11.5 tonnes of other textiles such as pillow cases to schools and community centres who use them in craft projects.

And when we refurbish the interiors of our aircraft, that material is converted into bags and accessories by Canadian company Mariclaro. Items produced include leather items from seat covers removed from five of our B777 aircraft. Duffle bags and purses were also made using the blue cabin material in their design. The company also donates five per cent of all profits to the Air Canada Foundation.

For more information on Air Canada’s social responsibility initiatives, go to <https://www.aircanada.com/ca/en/aco/home/about/corporate-responsibility.html>



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<https://mraircanada.mediaroom.com/Recycling-at-Air-Canada-is-about-more-than-just-paper-and-aluminum-cans>