



Pollution Prevention Project Fellowship

Plastic pollution is a threat to biodiversity and human health. Diverse and effective solutions to this issue are needed, and should include source-reduction, improved and more sustainable waste management, and cleanup. The U of T Trash Team's [Pollution Prevention Projects](#) are solutions-based research projects to inform the prevention of plastic pollution, one source at a time. We combine innovative prevention strategies and case studies with empirical research and knowledge transfer/mobilization to policy makers and managers.

Our initial Pollution Prevention Project ([Divert and Capture](#)) was aimed at reducing microfiber pollution from textiles. We first tested filters on washing machines to collect data on their effectiveness and then scaled up, by putting filters in the homes of 100 residences in Parry Sound with support from Georgian Bay Forever. This pilot study showed a significant decrease in microfiber pollution in treated effluent. The findings are currently informing legislation introduced to require filters on washing machines in Ontario, California, Oregon and France.

For the fellowship, we are looking for candidates who are passionate about reducing plastic pollution and have a creative idea to propose their own Pollution Prevention Project. This year, we are looking for fellows interested in proposing the next phase to one of our existing projects – to help us get from first launch to policy change. We are specifically looking for people who are interested in helping us [reduce single-use foodware](#) (e.g., at restaurants, in schools, or at events); informing how to improve waste management in the City to reduce litter (e.g., via better [garbage bins](#), [cigarette butt receptacles](#), or improved collection services); or finally, continuing to work on solutions to [reduce the leakage of construction debris](#). If you are interested, please read more about our previous work, brainstorm next steps, and apply!

NOTE: Please be creative! Your solution does not have to be the same as what we've already done. For example, if you are interested in improving waste management in the city, we do not expect you to repeat the studies we did in a different part of the city.

Fellowship Description:

We are looking for a fellow who is a student or recent graduate (within the last 2 years) from any university to lead a Pollution Prevention Project aimed at reducing a specific source of plastic pollution locally (with applicability to scale up provincially, federally, or globally). The fellowship will be a 4-month full-time (or 8-month part-time) position, mentored by Drs. Chelsea Rochman and Hayley McIlwraith of the U of T Trash Team, with seed funding to jump-start a data-informed solution. The position is competitive, with only one available per year.

Position Details:

- This position can be full-time for 4 months or part-time for 8 at \$20/hour; up to \$12,000 in total stipend.
- The fellow will have access to up to \$4,000 for supplies, travel, communications.



- The fellow will meet at least once bi-weekly with a mentor from the U of T Trash Team – with more frequent meetings during the initial stage.
- Mentorship will be provided, and the fellow will have access to resources and the network within the U of T Trash Team and/or Rochman Lab.

The fellow is expected to:

- Show strong leadership skills.
- Research, design and/or pilot a solution for one source of plastic pollution.
- Collect data to better understand the problem and/or test the efficacy of a solution.
- Transfer the knowledge to decision-makers in policy, industry, community or environmental management.

Application Process: Please send 1) a short cover letter describing why you would like this position and why you are qualified for it, 2) a two-page proposal that includes background on the problem (i.e., source of plastic pollution) with references, the objectives of your proposed research or pilot project, an action plan for the research project or pilot to test a solution (keep feasibility in mind), any preliminary data if relevant or your expected results, the significance of the project, and a budget, and 3) your CV or resume with contact information for two references. **Send to Dr. Chelsea Rochman at chelsea.rochman@utoronto.ca by Monday March 2, 2026.**

Support for fellowship:

This fellowship is supported by Community Matters Toronto and Juarne Clarke. [Community Matters Toronto](#) is a registered charity supporting local initiatives in St. James Town and the surrounding neighbourhoods. Focused originally on grassroots community development they have gradually pivoted to direct resources and efforts using a similar approach in meeting the climate emergency confronting us today. Juarne Clarke is a friend of Community Matters Toronto.

This is the fifth year of this fellowship, with the first supported project focused on [plastic pre-production pellets](#), the second on [wet wipes](#), the third on [single-use produce bags](#), and the fourth on [alternatives to single-use plastics](#).