

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: Free Menstrual Products in the City's Recreation Facilities and City Hall

Date Prepared: October 18, 2023

Report To: Committee of the Whole

Councillor and Role: Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary, Community Services

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required: That Council approve funding of \$12,000 to install and implement the provision of free menstrual products in the City's recreation facilities and City Hall with further funds added to the following year's budgets to maintain the initiative and continue to monitor other sources of funding to support this initiative.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

Period poverty describes the struggle many women, girls, and people who menstruate face while trying to afford menstrual products, access information, hygiene facilities, and/or waste management. The term also refers to the increased economic vulnerability faced by these populations due to the financial burden posed by the high cost of menstrual supplies. According to the Government of Canada, one in three Canadians who need pads, tampons, or other menstrual products, struggle to afford them. Marginalized communities, such as refugees, homeless individuals, sex workers, trans and non-binary people, Indigenous communities, and people living in rural and remote areas, are at greater risk of period poverty.

Lack of access to menstrual products can have physical and psychological health risks. This can be due to using unsuitable improvised solutions; using products longer than their recommended timeframe, which may increase the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome; and/or avoiding school, work, and social engagements due to feelings of embarrassment, shame and/or stigma that may surround menstruation.

In October 2022, the Government of Canada [announced their proposal to strengthen regulations under the Canada Labour Code](#) to provide free menstrual products to workers in [federally regulated industries](#). In addition, Budget 2022 allocated \$25 million over two years for Women and Gender Equality Canada to establish a national pilot for the [Menstrual Equity Fund](#), which will help make menstrual products available to people who struggle to afford them. In September 2023, [Women and Gender Equality Canada announced](#) that Food Banks Canada, one of the country's largest organizations to fight food insecurity, will receive \$17.9 million to run a national pilot that will:

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- Test approaches to distribute free menstrual products to community organizations serving diverse low-income populations across Canada
- Partner with several grassroots organizations across Canada that are already advancing menstrual equity to scale up education and awareness activities, which will inform Canadians about period poverty and reduce stigma around menstruation

In October 2021, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador shared [details for making period products available to students in the K-12 school system](#). This initiative began in January 2022 and makes products available in at least one bathroom in every school that has students in Grades 4 and above. It is being supported through an investment of \$30,000 as announced in [Budget 2021](#) and \$100,000 as announced in [Budget 2022](#). Research indicates that other provinces are providing menstrual products through schools as well.

Local community organizations that serve vulnerable populations provide these products to clients / residents when available, but this is typically dependent on donations. In some cases, organizations may purchase supplies upon request and if budget allows.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities resolved “[to petition the federal government to implement a national Period Poverty Task Force to develop a comprehensive long-term response to period poverty in Canada and ensure municipalities are consulted on how the strategy and the funding is implemented](#)”. In their decision note they identify that “the policy of free menstrual supplies in restrooms have been adopted by municipal jurisdictions including Victoria, Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Vancouver, Vancouver Parks Board, Edmonton, Winnipeg, City of Kitchener, Kitchener Public Library, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, National Assembly of Quebec, and Halifax.” However, City of St. John’s Senior Legal Counsel has advised that there are differences in the legislative authority given to municipalities between provinces and in some provinces municipalities have responsibility for public health, education, and social services (e.g. Ontario and British Columbia). In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, these functions are in the provincial government’s authority. In this context, addressing this issue is not the mandate of the City of St. John’s. However, this is an issue that impacts many City residents.

Overview of Potential Costing

The NLESD shared the prices from their tender from April 2023, as outlined below.

Item	Unit Price	Quantity/Box	Extended Cost
Thin Sanitary Napkins	0.2955	100	29.55
Ultrathin Sanitary Napkins	0.3595	100	35.95
Tampons	0.2888	100	28.88
Dispensers	229.00	N/A	229.00
		Subtotal	323.38
		HST (15%)	48.51

Total Tender Price	371.89
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If the City were to implement this in its six Recreation Facilities and City Hall in female and gender neutral public washrooms that are within the building (i.e. where there is a staff presence; not Kenmount Terrace public washrooms on the outside of the building), the initial startup costs to implement this would be approximately \$8,000 based on the NLESD tender rate. This does not include staffing costs to install the dispensers. While its difficult to estimate uptake and potential wastage, based on the [City of Mississauga](#) estimates of annual costs for product purchase and related services at \$100,000 annually for 100 facilities, the City could expect to spend \$12,000 annually. Please note this is based on disposable products and does not account for costs associated with reusable products such as menstrual underwear, menstrual cups, etc.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: If the City pursues this, it is estimated that it would cost approximately \$12,000 to implement this in the City's six existing Recreation Facilities and City Hall with similar ongoing annual costs.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Users of the City's Recreation Facilities and City Hall.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions:
 - A Connected City: Develop and deliver programs, services and public spaces that build safe, healthy and vibrant communities.
 - A Connected City: Increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the City.
4. Alignment with Adopted Plans:
 - a. Healthy City Strategy
5. Accessibility and Inclusion: This is a health and gender equity issue. The provision of these products in City facilities would increase residents' ability to participate in work, school, and social activities
6. Legal or Policy Implications: N/A
7. Privacy Implications: N/A
8. Engagement and Communications Considerations: N/A
9. Human Resource Implications: N/A

10. Procurement Implications: Products should be safe and free of toxins and consideration should be given to environmentally-friendly products, such as reusable products and products without plastic applicators to minimize packaging.

11. Information Technology Implications: N/A

12. Other Implications: N/A

Recommendation:

That Council approve funding of \$12,000 to install and implement the provision of free menstrual products in the identified city facilities above with further funds added to the following year's budgets to maintain the initiative and continue to monitor other sources of funding to support this initiative.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Free Menstrual Products in the City's Recreation Facilities and City Hall.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Oct 19, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

No Signature - Task assigned to Natalie Godden was completed by workflow administrator Karen Chafe

Natalie Godden - Oct 19, 2023 - 9:02 AM

Tanya Haywood - Oct 19, 2023 - 1:28 PM