



**SUBJECT: Provision of Free Menstrual Hygiene Products in City Facilities**

**TO: Mayor and Members of Council**

**FROM: Recreation, Community and Culture Department**

Report Number: RCC-14-22

Wards Affected: all

File Numbers: 925-01

Date to Committee: November 8, 2022

Date to Council: November 8, 2022

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### **Recommendation:**

Direct the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to implement option 1 for the permanent provision of free menstrual hygiene products in city facilities as outlined in Report RCC-14-22.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
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### **Background and Discussion:**

#### **Background**

In 2019, the City of London became the first municipality to offer free menstrual hygiene products in public washrooms. This movement is quickly reaching other governments and institutions, resulting in several municipalities and school boards across the province embracing this concept.

In October 2021, Ontario launched free menstrual hygiene products in schools. Through their research and stemming from a survey conducted by Plan International Canada, 63% of women have regularly or occasionally missed an activity because of their period and concerns about not being able to access menstrual hygiene products or proper

facilities. The report also noted that 34% of women and girls have had to regularly or occasionally sacrifice something else within their budget to afford menstrual products.

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at the Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk and Accountability meeting, the Pink Project Burlington delegated to committee with a presentation outlining the needs for free menstrual hygiene products in public washrooms. Through the City of Burlington's Community Matching Fund, the Pink Project received \$2,000 towards their initiative. This helped the project launch at several sites in Burlington; all seven Burlington Public Libraries, Joe Dog's Gasbar Grill, Value Village and Halton Police District 3. During this presentation, it was shared with committee that according to the Canadian Public Health Association, 70% of Canadian women/girls have missed work or school due to their period and 66% of women under the age of 25 struggle to afford menstrual hygiene products. As an outcome of the presentation, the following staff direction was approved:

Direct the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to consult with the Pink Project Burlington and other stakeholders and report to the Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services Committee in Q1 2022 with a pilot project (including costs, options, and recommendations) to provide free menstrual hygiene products in city facilities.

A report was presented to the Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services Committee on March 3, 2022, where staff recommended Option 1; to pilot free menstrual hygiene products in baskets at public washrooms for the remainder of 2022. Council unanimously supported the staff direction at the Regular Meeting of Council on March 22, 2022.

## **Discussion**

In April of 2022, menstrual hygiene products in baskets were introduced into 90 public washrooms at Recreation Facilities and City Hall. Utilizing savings in janitorial supplies realized due to the provincially mandated closure in January 2022, staff initially purchased 10,000 tampons and pads at a cost of \$2,500. A second purchase was made in July for an additional 10,000 tampons and pads at \$2,500. Thus far, consumption has been approximately 2,000 tampons and pads a month collectively throughout all facilities.

Through in person feedback, social media, and several media outlets, the response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive. Staff often receive compliments and positive feedback from the users of the products and those who comment on the inclusive approach the City of Burlington has taken. Frontline staff were also provided a FAQ (frequently asked questions) sheet to help educate the public and answer any questions they might have.

A concern considered as part of the research and mentioned in the March report, was the potential misuse or vandalism of menstrual hygiene products. Throughout the pilot, staff did report a handful of incidents where products were misused. Continuing to educate the public, and having facility operations staff continue to monitor usage, and conduct their bathroom checks hourly, will help mitigate this risk. Moreover, incidents of this nature are not uncommon in recreation facilities. Removing menstrual hygiene products will not eliminate vandalism; it is not uncommon for staff to enter a washroom where soap, paper towels or toilet paper have been misused.

Through extensive research, data collection and in collaboration with the Pink Project Burlington, local institutions, municipalities, and school boards in Ontario, offering free menstrual hygiene products in public washrooms is considered as essential to the community as offering toilet paper, soap and paper towels. Providing menstrual hygiene products in all public washrooms, regardless of their assigned gender, provides a more inclusive approach to support the menstrual needs of transgender and non-binary individuals.

### **Options Considered**

#### Option 1: (Recommended)

This option includes permanently offering free menstrual hygiene products in baskets in public facing washrooms at the City's recreation facilities, including City Hall. This results in 92 washrooms across 20 facilities. An ongoing annual cost of up to \$10,000 for supplies. This includes Men's, Women's and Universal change rooms and washrooms.

#### Option 2:

This option includes offering free menstrual hygiene products in dispensers in public facing washrooms at the City's recreation facilities, including City Hall. This results in one dispenser in each of the 92 washrooms across 20 facilities. The initial cost of the dispensers is \$32,000, with an ongoing annual cost of up to \$10,000 for supplies. This includes Men's, Women's and Universal change rooms and washrooms.

#### Option 3:

Discontinue providing free menstrual hygiene products in city facilities. This option would eliminate the cost associated with purchasing the products in addition to the potential misuse of products. The risks associated with discontinuing this initiative include the potential for negative feedback from the media and the public, reducing the service level and expectations of the customer, and not aligning with the goal of providing inclusive facilities.

## **Financial Matters:**

### **Total Financial Impact**

The cost of supplies of up to \$10,000, will be absorbed in the 2023 operating budget through onetime savings during Skyway construction. Purchasing, replenishing, and tracking of inventory will be closely monitored and budget numbers will be adjusted according to usage. A permanent budget provision will be included as part of the 2024 budget.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

The purchasing, replenishing, and tracking of inventory of menstrual hygiene products will be conducted by Facility Operations staff in the Recreation, Community and Culture department at no additional costs.

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## **Engagement Matters:**

City staff consulted and collaborated with several key stakeholders to ensure the recommendations in this report were thoroughly discussed and viable options were presented to Council for their consideration. This included the Pink Project Burlington, Halton School Boards, City of Burlington Libraries, the City of London, our own findings from the pilot, and a number of local institutions where the Pink Project Burlington was implemented.

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## **Conclusion:**

The City of Burlington and the Recreation, Community and Culture Department continue to strive to provide inclusive facilities to the community. Through extensive research, data collection, learnings from our pilot program, and in collaboration with the Pink Project Burlington, city staff are recommending Option 1; to permanently offer free menstrual hygiene products in baskets in public facing washrooms at the City's recreation facilities, including City Hall. Through the engagement conducted by city staff, it was recommended that providing free menstrual hygiene products in baskets at each washroom offers a more inviting option as well as reassures individuals that the products are free.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Manager of Facility Operations

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**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.