



**SUBJECT: Provision of free menstrual hygiene products in city facilities**

**TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.**

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

Report Number: RCC-02-22

Wards Affected: all

File Numbers: 925-01

Date to Committee: March 3, 2022

Date to Council: March 22, 2022

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### **Recommendation:**

Direct the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to implement option 1 for the provision of free menstrual hygiene products in city facilities as outlined in recreation, community and culture department report RCC-02-22 and report back on the results of the program to the Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services Committee in Q4 2022.

### **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 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, 66% of women under the age of 25 struggle to afford menstrual products and women in Canada spend an average of \$9,000 on menstrual 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.

## **Discussion**

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 now considered as essential to the community as offering toilet paper, soap and paper towels. Furthermore, providing menstrual hygiene products in all public washrooms provides a more inclusive approach to support the menstrual needs of transgender and non-binary individuals.

A concern considered as part of the research was the potential misuse or vandalism of menstrual hygiene products. Through discussions with various municipalities and institutions that have already implemented free menstrual hygiene products in public washrooms, the reports of vandalism and misuse of products was much lower than originally expected. Having facility operations staff continue to monitor usage, and conduct their bathroom checks hourly, will help mitigate this risk.

Additionally, forecasting usage of the products is a challenge due to closures and/or reduced occupancies in accordance with provincial regulations caused by covid-19. To estimate the usage and cost of products several factors were considered such as facility participation numbers, City of Burlington demographic profiles and data from the City of

London as the first to implement the provision of free menstrual hygiene products in public facilities.

City staff reviewed several options and the costs associated with providing free menstrual hygiene products and are providing three options.

### **Options Considered**

#### **Option 1: (Recommended)**

This option includes offering free menstrual products in baskets in public facing washrooms at the City's recreation facilities, including City Hall, as a pilot for the remainder of 2022. This results in 90 washrooms across 19 facilities. An initial investment of \$15,000 will allow city staff to purchase approximately 60,000 tampons and pads for public washrooms. This cost will be absorbed in the Facility Operations operating budget in 2022, utilizing savings in janitorial supplies realized due to the provincially mandated closure in January 2022. City staff will monitor usage, engage feedback from the community, and report back their findings in Q4 of 2022 with recommendations and requests for the 2023 budget.

#### **Option 2:**

This option includes offering free menstrual 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 90 washrooms across 19 facilities. The initial cost of the dispensers is \$32,000, with a further initial investment of \$15,000 in supplies for the remainder of 2022. The dispensers will be a one-time cost for 2022; the \$15,000 for the purchase of 60,000 tampons and pads for public washrooms will be absorbed in the Facility Operations operating budget in 2022, utilizing savings in janitorial supplies realized due to the provincially mandated closure in January 2022 and will be an ongoing annual cost which would need to be included in the 2023 operating budget.

#### **Option 3:**

This option includes offering free menstrual hygiene products at Customer Service counters in the City's recreation facilities, including City Hall. An initial investment of \$15,000 will allow city staff to purchase approximately 60,000 tampons and pads for provision of menstrual hygiene products. This cost will be absorbed in the Facility Operations operating budget in 2022, utilizing savings in janitorial supplies realized due to the provincially mandated closure in January 2022 and will be an ongoing annual cost which would need to be included in the 2023 operating budget. This option reduces the potential vandalism and misuse of products by having menstrual hygiene products

distributed by city staff. This option is much less discrete and is limited to the hours a service counter is open to the public. City staff do not recommend this option.

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## **Financial Matters:**

### **Total Financial Impact**

A one-time cost of \$15,000 to pilot this program for the remainder of 2022. This cost will be absorbed in the existing Facility Operations operating budget in 2022, utilizing savings in janitorial supplies realized due to the provincially mandated closure in January 2022. City staff will monitor usage, engage feedback from the community, and report back their findings in Q4 of 2022 with recommendations and requests for the 2023 budget.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

The purchasing, replenishing and tracking of inventory of menstrual 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 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 and in collaboration with the Pink Project Burlington, city staff are recommending Option 1; to pilot free menstrual products in baskets at public washrooms for the remainder of 2022. Through the engagement conducted by city staff, it was recommended that providing free menstrual products in baskets at each washroom offers a more inviting option as well as reassures individuals that the products are free. At the end of the trial period, city staff will report to Council on the actual cost and uptake of the project, and qualitative feedback received by users of the

products. The final report will also include recommendations and updated costs for the future of the initiative.

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Respectfully submitted,

Victor Ljuljdjuraj

Manager of Facility Operations

(905) 335-7723

**Appendices:**

- A. The Pink Project CSSRA presentation November 30, 2021
- B. Municipal Buildings List

**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.