


Hamilton

CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
 Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 20, 2020
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Menstrual Products Pilot (HSC20001) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Mark Weingartner (905) 546-2424 Ext. 6095 Leigh Ann Sutherland (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3082
SUBMITTED BY:	Grace Mater Director, Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (a) That the 12-month Menstrual Products Pilot Project utilizing the following approaches be approved:
- i) Universal Approach - make menstrual products available in women's and universal washrooms in 5 recreation centres, one in each recreation district;
 - ii) Targeted Approach - partnering with Hamilton Food Share and local food banks to distribute menstrual products through Food Share's existing network; and,
- (b) That the Outstanding Business List item identified as Menstrual Products Affordability Pilot Program, be considered complete and removed from the Outstanding Business List

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 22, 2019 Council directed staff to explore the feasibility of a twelve-month pilot project that would provide menstrual products (pads and tampons) to those with financial need. This Report proposes a pilot project consisting of two distinct

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approaches at a total cost of approximately \$121,000 with net levy funding being redirected from Special Supports Benefits.

Through a universal approach, the City of Hamilton would make menstrual products available in women's and universal washrooms in 5 recreation centres, one in each recreation district. This approach is estimated to cost \$30,000.

Recreation Centre	Address	Number of Female/ Universal Washrooms
Dalewood	1150 Main St. West	3
Dominic Agostino Riverdale	150 Violet Drive	4
Huntington Park	87 Brentwood Drive	3
Norman Pinky Lewis	192 Wentworth St. North	3
Westmount	35 Lynbrook Drive	4

A targeted approach would take advantage of partnering with Hamilton Food Share and local food banks to distribute menstrual products through Food Share's existing network. The City of Hamilton would fund the purchase of menstrual products for distribution. This approach is estimated to cost \$91,000.

If approved, funding for the menstrual products pilot project will result in a reallocation of Special Supports 100% Net Levy health-related benefits in the amount of \$121,000, per the authority granted to the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities Department through Report CS13009(a). Details on the impact of the reallocation will be provided to Committee in the second quarter of 2020.

Cost and the number of products distributed through the pilot will be tracked. Staff will report back to Council in the first quarter of 2021.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On December 10, 2018, a delegation by FemCare Community Health Initiative requested that the City of Hamilton fund menstrual hygiene management products for disenfranchised women. The Board of Health (BOH) motion directed staff to review "the cost and implementation of providing shelters; drop-in centres; respite centres; others

working with homeless, street-involved, low-income girls, and transgender individuals to free menstrual hygiene products”, and report back. Staff was also asked to engage with the school boards to examine the feasibility of providing menstrual products to students in middle and secondary schools.

On May 13, 2019, staff returned to the BOH with Report BOH19019 regarding information on enhanced access to no cost menstrual products, a cost analysis of providing identified populations with menstrual products, summaries of relevant consultations with internal and external community partners, and options for moving forward.

On May 22, 2019, Council directed staff to “explore the feasibility of providing menstrual products (pads and tampons) to those with financial need for assistance and report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee outlining specific target populations, location and distribution options, costs, potential sponsors, community and organizational partners and an evaluation plan for a 12-month pilot project.”

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

None

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Increasing access to menstrual products can be accomplished by distributing no cost products or through financial benefit programs that support vulnerable individuals to purchase these products. A comprehensive consultation was conducted by staff for the May 2019 Board of Health meeting. The section below provides a brief summary of updated information.

City of Hamilton

A scan of City of Hamilton services was originally completed as part of Report BOH19019, and included Ontario Works, Housing Services, Public Health, Children’s Services and Neighbourhood Development, Recreation and the Social Navigator Program (Police and Paramedic services). Internal programs reported that while they recognize the need for access to menstrual products, there were no comprehensive internal programs that are able to provide them. Some services are able to provide products through donated supplies, while others utilize discretionary funds to purchase products. Overall however, supplies are very limited and do not meet the demand. Staff also refer clients to community resources.

Recreation Division

The City's Recreation Division consulted with and made recommendations to staff on program options, locations, costing and monitoring. This information is incorporated into the Report recommendations.

Hamilton Food Share

Hamilton Food Share engaged with the Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development Division and provided the targeted program option and costing included in this Report.

School Boards

While the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Catholic School Board (HWDCSB) recognize the importance of this issue and are looking at potential opportunities to support students with feminine hygiene products, there is currently no centrally coordinated approach. Individual schools provide products to students as they are able to.

Community Partners

Community agencies continue to identify a need for low cost or no cost menstrual products for individuals in need. While a few agencies indicated they are able to purchase some menstrual products for very specific client programs (shelters and drop in agencies), all agencies indicated that they primarily rely on donations, and rarely, if ever, are able to meet the demand.

Other Communities

As of September 2019, the City of Toronto, Waterloo Region and Thames Valley District School Boards began providing free menstrual products in middle schools and high schools. Many other Ontario and Canadian communities recognize the issue of "period poverty" are exploring ways to provide access to low cost or no cost menstrual products.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

Access to menstrual products is essential for health, well-being, and full participation in society. Lack of access to menstrual products due to financial constraints or "period poverty" is a health equity issue affecting girls, women and persons who menstruate. All Hamilton residents deserve the opportunity to reach their full health potential without disadvantage due to social determinants of health.

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The menstrual products pilot program has been developed with the following principles in mind:

- supporting individuals who menstruate and are experiencing financial need
- upholding personal dignity
- providing choice

The proposed pilot will include two methods of distribution; one that provides more universal access to menstrual products and one targeted approach. Both approaches attempt to make products available across the City with a focus on individuals experiencing low income. It is important to note however that a city-wide implementation strategy would not be addressed until a full program is implemented. Including additional facilities will increase costs, however these costs will not be identified until the pilot is evaluated.

i) Universal Approach through City of Hamilton Recreation Centres

Free menstrual products (tampons and pads) will be available to the public in all women's and universal washrooms in 5 City of Hamilton recreation centres. One recreation centre has been identified in each recreation district.

There are no reliable methods for estimating how many menstrual products will be required, therefore staff have budgeted \$500 per recreation centre per month for purchasing products (\$6,000 per centre annually). Based on the cost of menstrual products through Eway (Staples), a budgeted amount of \$500 will purchase approximately 1,500 products.

Products will be available in baskets or bins in 18 women's' and universal washrooms. Monitoring and restocking of products will be done by custodial staff. Wall mounted dispensers could be purchased and installed at a cost of \$361 per dispenser, for a total cost of \$6,147 (18 dispensers); however, staff recommend less permanent fixtures for the pilot.

The estimated total cost of this "Universal Approach" for twelve months is \$30,000.

Information regarding cost and the number of products distributed will be tracked and reported. Distribution of products can be adjusted between recreation centres should there be significant differences in uptake.

Benefits of this approach include the following:

- Universal access, products are available to anyone in need
- Self-serve model does not require contact with anyone
- Recreation centres are accessible and close to main transit routes
- Products available in most areas of the city
- Low start-up costs

Limitations of this approach include the following:

- Program not limited to those in financial need
- Does not necessarily accommodate individual preferences regarding products
- Requires a capital cost for purchase of dispensers
- Requires monitoring and restocking at all locations
- City-wide implementation would increase costs

ii) Targeted Approach through Hamilton Food Share and Food Bank Partners

The City will fund the purchase and distribution of menstrual products through Hamilton Food Share (HFS) and its food bank partners. HFS will purchase products in bulk, store them and then distribute them through the existing food banks' network and infrastructure. Food bank partners will distribute products to individuals and families accessing their services.

Through their own costing analysis, HFS estimates the annual cost of supplying menstrual products to approximately 10,000 individuals for twelve months (both pads and tampons) at \$91,000.

Information regarding the number of products distributed and individuals served will be tracked by HFS and reported to the City of Hamilton.

Benefits of targeted approach include the following:

- Leverages Food Share's buying power
- Leverages existing foodbank partnerships and distribution networks
- No associated start-up costs
- Concentration of foodbanks in areas of high need (the central part of the city) as well as locations in Ancaster, Dundas, east Hamilton and on the mountain
- Most foodbank locations are accessible and close to main transit routes
- Food Share and foodbank partners utilize a system for tracking usage, monitoring costs, and reporting

Limitations of this approach include the following:

- Individuals must initially request menstrual products
- Does not necessarily accommodate individual preferences regarding products
- Not everyone in financial need accesses foodbanks

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Option 1

An alternative for consideration would be to issue funds on a monthly basis, for the purchase of menstrual products, to individuals receiving Ontario Works (OW) assistance.

The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CCEA) estimates that the annual cost of menstrual products per individual is \$87^{1,2}. This amounts to an additional \$7.25 per month per individual. These funds would be issued as a monthly benefit to menstruating individuals through SAMS (Social Assistance Management System).

Based on the current OW caseload, there are approximately 6,797 eligible individuals (females 12 to 49 years of age based on OW caseload as of February 2019³). Therefore, the cost of this proposal is approximately \$591,339. Actual cost will vary slightly from month to month as the OW caseload figures fluctuate.

Financial: The menstrual products pilot project would be funded by reallocating 100% Provincial Discretionary Benefits capped subsidy savings and by reducing and/or eliminating some health-related benefits for OW and ODSP participants.

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

Benefits of this approach include the following:

- Targets individuals in significant financial need
- Allows for individual choice
- Relatively easy to administer, would be issued as an additional OW benefit

Limitations of this approach include the following:

- Program limited only to individuals receiving OW assistance
- As OW and ODSP caseloads fluctuate, there will be a corresponding increase or decrease of available funding
- The Province has not provided any information on funding levels for Discretionary Benefits in 2021
- Significantly more expensive than other options

Option 2

Council could decide to approve only one of the recommended approaches:

- i) the Universal Approach at \$30,000; or,
- ii) the Targeted Approach at \$91,000.

¹ Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis. (2018). Access to menstrual hygiene products for the vulnerable: Canadian Results. Retrieved from <https://www.cancea.ca/sites/economic-analysis.ca/files/Summary%20results%20All%20May%2028.pdf>

² Referenced in original Board of Health Report dated May 13, 2019: *Menstrual Products BOH19019*.

³ Figure quoted in original Board of Health Report dated May 13, 2019: *Menstrual Products BOH19019*.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None

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