

City Council**Notice of Motion**

| | | | | |
|---------|--------|--|--|----------|
| MM43.15 | ACTION | | | Ward:All |
|---------|--------|--|--|----------|

Access to Menstrual Hygiene Products in Shelters - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Neethan Shan

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Community Development and Recreation Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Neethan Shan, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A to report back through the 2019 Budget process on the cost and implementation of providing shelters, drop-in centres, respite centres, 'Strong Neighbourhood' Community Centres and others working with homeless, street-involved, and low-income women, girls and trans individuals access to free menstrual hygiene products.

Summary

Many women know first-hand access to menstrual hygiene products is as necessary as access to toilet paper. Women of all economic and social backgrounds know that menstrual hygiene products are costly. It is estimated that a woman will use over 11,000 menstrual pads or tampons in her lifetime and spending over \$5,600 on essential menstrual hygiene products.

For low-income, precariously housed, and homeless women, girls and trans individuals, the inability to access tampons and pads is another barrier to full and equal participation in society. A report conducted by Plan Canada International polled 2,000 women under the age of 25 found that one third of Canadian women under the age of 25 say they have struggled to afford menstrual products. For too many women and girls living in shelters or who are precariously housed, the decision to buy menstrual hygiene products comes at the expense of eating or paying rent. Vulnerable women have reported that they often times resort to alternatives, such as rags, tissue paper, even newspaper, which can cause health problems.

This underscores what women and girls who have periods know – menstrual hygiene products are a necessity, not a luxury. In 2016, New York City Council voted unanimously to provide free menstrual hygiene products to women and girls in shelters, schools and prisons, recognizing both the necessity of menstrual hygiene products and ensuring women and girls with some of the greatest barriers to adequate menstrual hygiene products will have access to free pads and tampons.

According to the Canadian Centre of Economic Analysis, more than seven million tampons and pads are needed by vulnerable women and girls in Toronto. They estimate that it would cost roughly \$1.9 million to provide menstrual hygiene products to about 22,000 women in shelters and school-age girls from low-income brackets in Toronto, according to new research released in June 2018.

This year, the City of Toronto made a bold step in recognizing May 28, 2018 as the City's inaugural Menstrual Hygiene Day – a day recognized globally in an effort to end stigma and raise awareness. Menstruation is a natural and normal bodily function that affects 52 percent of the world's population, having the heaviest impact on our most vulnerable women and girls. Like toilet paper, soap, and water, menstrual hygiene products are not optional. Supplying menstrual hygiene products to our most vulnerable women and girls is a matter of dignity, as these products are essential to women's and girls' health, and paramount in ensuring full participation in work, school and society.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM43.15