

May 3, 2021

Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education
204 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister LaGrange,

Requesting a Ministerial Order directing the provision of free menstrual products in schools

At our April 27 public Board meeting, our Board unanimously passed the following motion:

Given that menstrual products are a basic need and that access to these products can be a barrier for students, the Board of Trustees moves that Administration explore ways to provide free menstrual products in Division schools, including pursuing partnerships, to provide what should be essential products in Edmonton Public School washrooms.

While we're proud to be leaders on this issue, our Board also recognizes that the inability of students to access free period products has detrimental health and education implications for all menstruating students across the province. Poor menstrual hygiene can cause physical health risks and has been linked to reproductive and urinary tract infections.^[1] It is estimated that one in seven Canadian girls have either missed school or left school early because of a lack of access to period products. Furthermore, it is estimated that a third of young Canadian women cannot afford menstrual products.^[2] Given the economic impacts of COVID, it is safe to assume that the barriers to access and the inability to afford menstrual products have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Anecdotally, teachers have shared that period poverty has meant missed opportunities for students and has led to lower self-confidence. Teachers, in many cases, are spending their own resources to provide menstrual products for students who need them in an effort to ensure they remain at school and participate in school-based activities while menstruating.

Menstruation is a normal biological process; therefore, access to the menstrual products is a basic need. Just as schools provide toilet tissue and soap, so should they provide menstrual products.

Earlier this spring, Edmonton City Council voted to provide feminine hygiene products in public women's and inclusive washrooms and change rooms where toilet paper, soap, and hand towels/dryers are provided.

Other Canadian school jurisdictions have taken the step in providing free menstrual products. The Toronto District School Board, the largest board in Canada, has provided access to menstrual products and educational materials to students at no cost since 2019.

Also in 2019, the government of British Columbia issued a Ministerial Order that all 60 public school districts provide free menstrual products to high school students by the end of 2019.^[3]

In issuing the Order, then Education Minister Rob Fleming said it was time to “normalize and equalize access to menstrual products in schools, helping to create a better learning environment for students.” He added that it was common sense and long overdue.^[4]

We urge you to follow the lead of our neighbouring province and issue a Ministerial Order mandating that all schools in the province provide free access to period products, and supporting this Order with adequate funding to school boards.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

KM/mj

c: Lorrie Jess, President, Alberta School Boards Association

Attachments:

1. [Motion re Free Access to Free Menstrual Products in Edmonton Public Schools](#)

^[1]<https://www.policvalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/provincial-progress-campaign-end-period-poverty-canada>

^[2] Dube, D. (2018, May). One-third of young Canadian women can't afford menstrual products, report finds. Global News. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/4239800/canada-cost-of-menstrual-products/>

^[3] <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019SDPR0033-000587>

^[4]United Way website. <https://www.periodpromise.ca/blogs/news/free-menstrual-products-coming-to-bc-schools-people-in-need>

