

Considered at the Regular Council Meeting Held on September 10, 2019

RC - Agenda - 2019 09 10

Item 12.4

From: Michael McKnight (United Way) [<mailto:MichaelM@uwlm.ca>]

Sent: July-17-19 9:24 AM

To: Robert Vagramov <RVagramov@portmoody.ca>

Subject: Municipalities can make a difference with United Way's Period Promise campaign

Dear Mayor Vagramov and Council,

I'm writing to you on behalf of United Way of the Lower Mainland regarding our Period Promise campaign and the associated work to increase access to menstruation products to vulnerable populations and address period poverty in the communities where we work.

As you may have heard, on June 17 the City of Victoria announced that they would begin providing free menstrual products in their publicly accessible facilities. As Mayor Helps said, "Providing free menstrual products in City facilities is a small, practical thing we can do that will make a big difference in the lives of many people in our community." Earlier this year the City of Fort St John announced they would be conducting their own study to better determine their own responsibility to support people who menstruate. Unfortunately, the need for this product is bigger than we could possibly imagine.

Period poverty is the widespread lack of access to menstrual products due to financial limitations. It affects girls, women, and trans folks around British Columbia, and it does so on a surprising scale. Almost one quarter of Canadian women say they have struggled to afford menstrual products for themselves or their children, and more than 66% say that periods have inhibited them from participating fully in the day-to-day activities of life. (Confidence and Puberty Study by Always, Proctor & Gamble, 2018).

With Period Promise we aim to eradicate period poverty. We do this by promoting simple policy changes and supporting organizations that have made a commitment to provide menstrual products by signing onto the Period Promise Policy Agreement. Nikki Hill and Sussanne Skidmore, our campaign co-chairs, have been incredible champions in pushing this forward with us.

We've had some incredible successes so far. The Ministry of Education has committed to providing free and zero-stigma access to menstrual products in public schools across the province, and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has provided us with a grant to research period poverty across the province. We've also had more than 15 organizations in the Lower Mainland sign the Period Promise Policy Agreement, which we will be happy to provide you.

We're starting to have exciting conversations with municipalities across the province about how they can be involved in making menstrual products more readily accessible in our communities. To support these efforts we have drafted a motion and backgrounder that can go to your Council. It outlines what we hope your municipality may do and why it would be beneficial to your community. You will find them attached to this e-mail.

We encourage you to work with your Councillors and Municipal staff to see if Port Moody may be able to contribute to this movement, and would be excited to speak with you about how we can partner together to make our communities more inclusive and accessible to everybody.

Sincerely,

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Michael McKnight

President & CEO

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**SHOW YOUR LOCAL LOVE.
TAKE ACTION TODAY.**

Addendum A: Draft Motion and Backgrounder to support efforts to expand access to menstrual products in municipal facilities.

Motion:

That City council direct staff to provide a report regarding the cost and implementation of providing city facilities, including recreational spaces and libraries, working with homeless, street-involved, and low income and vulnerable girls, women, trans individuals and non-binary people access to free menstrual products in a manner that reduces menstrual stigma. AND that the City endorse the United Way Period Promise campaign as a locally-built solution that promotes health, well being, security and dignity in our community.

Backgrounder:

Whereas:

1. Period poverty is the widespread lack of access to menstrual products due to financial limitations which affects girls, women, and trans and non-binary people in British Columbia who cannot afford menstrual products for themselves or are dependents of people who cannot afford menstrual products.
2. Almost one quarter of Canadian women say they have struggled to afford menstrual products for themselves or their children.
3. Period Poverty is a symptom of poverty and, as a result, is likely experienced at a higher rate by single mothers, transgendered and non-binary folks, indigenous communities, people of colour, people living with disabilities, and other marginalized groups who are affected by poverty at a disproportionately high rate.
4. People who are menstruating but do not have menstrual products available to them experience extreme social isolation by not being able to attend school, work, or community activities without experiencing stigma and shame.
5. People who experience period poverty are placing themselves at greater risk by using menstrual products for longer than their recommended time, or using unsanitary alternatives like rags or newspaper, placing their health and security at risk.
6. The United Way Period Promise campaign has been working to address the issue of period poverty as experienced by vulnerable people in the Lower Mainland for several years. It promotes policy change and has distributed hundreds of thousands of donated menstrual products to community agencies. In 2019, the United Way of the Lower Mainland distributed more than 200,000 donated products to more than 50 agencies. This work builds out awareness of period poverty in our community while promoting changes that can reduce the barriers and isolation faced by people who face it every single month.