

October 8, 2021

2021 : B21

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities
Senior Business Officials

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: **Enhanced Student Access to Free Menstrual Products in Ontario Schools**

Today, I am writing to provide you with information on an initiative which will increase student access to free menstrual products in Ontario schools. The Ministry of Education has heard from students and school boards of the difficulty faced by students who cannot afford menstrual products, and the impact this situation can have on students' health, hygiene, school participation and social-emotional well-being.

Through this initiative, the ministry will provide all school boards, school authorities and consortia with a starting supply of menstrual products to be provided to students at priority schools, free of cost.

A. NEW INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT MENSTRUAL EQUITY

The ministry has accepted a donation from Shoppers Drug Mart Incorporated, to provide six million menstrual pads each year, over a three-year term, beginning with the 2021-22 school year. Additionally, 1,200 product dispensers will be provided to facilitate the distribution of the menstrual products within schools.

Each school board, school authority and consortium will be provided an allocation of menstrual products for 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, and a one-time allocation of product dispensers (in 2021-22). Board allocations of menstrual pads are based on 2019-20 student enrolment data of female students aged 13-18 taken from the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS). Allocations of product dispensers were calculated using the number of secondary schools (2019-20) by board as a proxy for distributing the 1,200 dispensers across all boards.

Product allocations for school year 2021-22 for each school board/authority/consortium are listed in **Appendix A**.

Recognizing that many school boards across Ontario have initiated their own menstrual equity programs, we encourage school boards/school authorities/consortium to continue addressing period poverty by supplementing this supply where possible. We also note

this initiative is not intended to fully replace existing supplies of menstrual products available in schools at this stage.

B. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Each school board, school authority and consortium has the discretion to identify the most appropriate approach to distribute these free menstrual products to their students. The following factors should be considered in implementation:

- This supply of free menstrual products is intended to be distributed over the course of the school year (ten months).
- School boards have the discretion, as well as the knowledge of local needs, to best identify the priority secondary schools (and possibly elementary and middle schools) to receive free menstrual products through this initiative. The ministry encourages school boards to incorporate student voice, particularly with respect to student interests and perspectives, in the distribution of menstrual products.
- The ministry encourages school boards to ensure barrier-free access for students accessing menstrual products, and to consider student privacy in the provision and disposal of menstrual products.
- School boards may want to develop contingency plans for the distribution of menstrual products related to any future COVID-19 health restrictions.

C. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

The Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum for Grades 1-8 includes mandatory learning on menstruation. School boards, school authorities, and consortia are encouraged to propose that teaching staff include menstrual health and menstrual equity discussions as part of these and other lessons, as appropriate.

D. PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

Menstrual Pads

Through this initiative, school boards will receive cases of retail-grade menstrual pads manufactured by either Kimberly Clark or Proctor & Gamble. The number of pads allocated and the number of cases to be delivered to each board are listed in **Appendix A**.

The table below provides product details:

2021-22 Menstrual Product Supply to School Boards, Isolate Boards and Consortium		
Manufacturer	Brand and Product Title	Details
Kimberly Clark	U by Kotex U by Kotex CleanWear Ultra Thin Pads with Wings, Regular, Unscented	18 or 36 pads per box Individually wrapped pads
Proctor & Gamble	Always Ultra Thin Pads with Wings, Regular, Size 1 Unscented	62 pads per box Individually wrapped pads

Note: This table presents the product range available for the 2021-22 school year only; products and/or manufacturers may differ in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Product Dispensers

Through this initiative, “universal” design dispensers are being provided, which will ensure the container can hold and dispense pads from various manufacturers. Further specifications for the product dispensers include:

- Stainless steel construction (dimensions: 16” high x 4 ½” deep x 5” wide)
- Gravity-fed product release
- Holds approximately 50 pads when filled
- Hinged on the bottom to allow container to swing out from wall to refill
- Includes viewing slot to monitor re-stocking needs
- Locking lid
- Mounting requirements: four screws

Each school board will manage the costs associated with the installation of these product dispensers. Upon installation, product dispensers will become the property of the board and boards will be responsible for maintenance, replacement, and/or repair of product dispensers in schools. This initiative will not prevent school boards from continuing to use menstrual product dispensers acquired outside of this program.

E. PRODUCT DELIVERY

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services will deliver cases of the menstrual products and dispensers to each school board’s designated location. Deliveries are being targeted for December 2021. While a single delivery is planned for each location,

product dispensers may be delivered at a later date, depending on availability. School boards will be required to advise MGCS of their preferred delivery location at address: SCO.cse@ontario.ca.

F. ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING CONSIDERATIONS

Donations of product dispensers and menstrual products should be treated as “Priorities and Partnership Funding (PPF) In Kind” (i.e., no cash transaction) where all accounting rules of regular PPF grants will apply. Detailed instructions on reporting requirements will be shared with school boards, school authorities, and consortia through the 2021 -22 Revised Estimates instructions in Fall 2021.

In Spring 2022, the ministry will seek feedback from school boards regarding the implementation of this initiative. Staff are asked to note the number of schools receiving free menstrual products, the approach to distribution within schools, trends in demand, product selection/quantity, and any feedback regarding fulfilled/unmet student needs to inform this future discussion.

G. NEXT STEPS

The Ministry of Education will provide information for the execution of transfer payment agreements shortly. School boards will be contacted regarding delivery of dispensers and menstrual products in the coming weeks. Should you require additional information, please contact Dianne Persaud, Manager, Safe and Healthy Schools Branch at: Dianne.Persaud@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the students of Ontario. This program is an important step in addressing period poverty in Ontario schools, and part of the ministry’s commitment to helping all children and youth in Ontario succeed and lead safe, healthy, and productive lives.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Attachment: Appendix A – Product allocations to school boards, authorities and consortium.

c: Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
Chair, Indigenous Trustees' Council, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
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Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
Secretary, Conseil ontarien des directions de l'éducation de langue française (CODELF)
Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
President of OSBCU, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
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President, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
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Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Student Trustees' Association – l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO)
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