



Dawn Danko
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June 24, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
315 Front Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8

Re: Promoting Menstrual Equity in Ontario Schools

Dear Minister Lecce,

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I am writing to express strong support for the Free the Flow movement, which calls on the Ministry of Education and provincial government to fund the provision of menstrual hygiene products at all publicly funded schools in an equitable and barrier-free manner.

Period poverty is a serious equity issue affecting low-income people who menstruate in Canada and around the world. Reports show 1-in-4 people struggle to buy menstrual hygiene products for themselves or their children. Through a one-time donation facilitated by the United Way of Hamilton and Halton, HWDSB previously provided menstrual products to 10 local public schools in lower-income areas in March 2020. However, a one-time donation is not enough to create long-lasting, equitable change, and a significant investment in infrastructure for product distribution is still required.

On June 14, 2021, trustees approved a motion to prepare a report to provision free menstrual products in the washrooms of all HWDSB schools in a similar manner to other sanitation products. In the past, these products have been made available to students on request; however, we believe such items should be more widely accessible for students in washrooms to ensure the privacy and dignity of students. Readily providing these products in washrooms both removes barriers faced by students and ensures students have access to products that are essential to menstrual health, comfort and participation in school and society.

Every student who menstruates should be able to focus on their education and participation in school activities without worrying about a lack of access to pads, tampons and other menstrual products. We echo the request of OSTA-AECO and other school boards for the province to establish a new fund that will allocate monies towards school to provide menstrual hygiene products equitably and free of charge for all students who menstruate.

Menstrual products are a necessity for full participation in society, and every woman, girl, trans man and gender non-binary person should have barrier-free access to the menstrual products for the benefit of both their physical and mental well-being. We hope that the Ministry will consider establishing this fund and taking this important step towards equity in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "D Danko".

Dawn Danko
Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Cc: Ontario Public School Boards' Association
Chairs of all Ontario School Boards
All Hamilton City Councillors
All Hamilton Members of Parliament
All Hamilton Members of Provincial Parliament