



STUDENTS ADVOCATE FOR FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN EDMONTON SCHOOLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free menstrual products can end period poverty and promote menstrual equity

EDMONTON, AB - Today Student Advocates for Public Health (SAPH) hosted an online forum calling for the provision of free menstrual products for all students in Edmonton schools to end period poverty and foster menstrual equity. "Menstrual hygiene products are not a luxury...like toilet paper, soap and water, hygiene products are not optional," said Saadya Hamdan, Director of Gender Equality at Plan International Canada. "They are necessary and essential to women's and girls' health, and participating in work, school and society."

SAPH is calling on the Edmonton Public School Board to provide free menstrual products to students in all public schools. The provision of menstrual products is important for two key reasons: to promote menstrual equity and to combat period poverty.

Menstruating students should be focusing on their next school period rather than their period. Fifty-one percent of women and girls across Canada reported they occasionally missed out on activities because of concerns accessing appropriate menstrual products and facilities, while twelve percent reported this problem as a regular occurrence in their life. Moreover, The Canadian government recognizes

recognizes that school age children are a vulnerable population who need access to free menstrual products.

The costs of menstrual products can be a large financial burden for students and families. In 2015, Canada eliminated the tax on menstrual hygiene products. We can take this a step further by providing access to free menstrual products in schools. Twenty-seven percent of menstruating Canadians report that they have had to sacrifice other essential items in their budget in order to afford menstrual products. For Edmontonian youth, this poses a significant challenge as one in six children are living in poverty and eight percent face the barrier of accessing menstrual products on a regular basis. This is a considerable amount of adolescents and teens that face barriers in accessing appropriate menstrual products.

The provision of free menstrual products in schools will aid in destigmatizing and normalizing menstruation in the greater Edmonton society. This is of utmost importance as forty percent of Canadian women and girls have regularly experienced being made fun of for being on their period by a male peer, friend, colleague, or family member. Furthermore, thirty-eight percent have felt the need to lie about being on their period and/or conceal their menstrual products.

Through increasing the discussion around menstruation with this initiative, as well as increasing the visibility of menstrual products within schools, menstruation can become more normalized. Student Advocates for Public Health is a team of graduate students at the University of Alberta who advocate for initiatives that promote community health. We believe students in all Edmonton schools deserve healthy, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.

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