

ADVOCACY BRIEF:

The difference government can make through United Way's Period Promise campaign.

Dear Mayor Steele and Council Members,

I'm writing to you on behalf of United Way Niagara 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.

We recognize the role our local government can play in removing barriers to access the basic period product needs of vulnerable populations in Niagara. I invite you to learn about the opportunity to implement minor, yet very effective, policy changes at the local government level, to reduce and eliminate period poverty.

Period poverty is the widespread lack of access to menstrual products due to financial limitations. It affects girls, women, transgendered and non-binary individuals throughout Niagara, and it does so on a surprising scale. 26% of surveyed Canadian respondents say they have struggled to afford menstrual products for themselves or their children¹, and more than 66% say that periods have inhibited them from participating fully in the day-to-day activities of life².

With the support of the Government of British Columbia, United Way was able to release the Period Promise Research Report in March 2021³. This is landmark research in British Columbia and across the country. The research has provided a clear and comprehensive understanding of how the lack of access to menstrual products has a serious impact on their community. Here are some of the key highlights:

- 26% of respondents indicated that they had gone through a period without having menstrual products available to them. It was much higher for respondents who are Indigenous, living with a physical or mental disability, or have an annual household income below \$40,000
- Not having access to menstrual products is an isolating factor in how people live their day-to-day lives, with 18% of respondents indicated that they missed school, 22% missed work, 29% missed community events, 27% missed social events
- Nearly 75% of respondents indicated that having access to products at community organizations allows them to be more engaged in their community

¹ [Period Project Research, Government of British Columbia](#)

² [Confidence and Puberty Study by Always, Proctor & Gamble, 2018](#)

³ [Period Project Research, Government of British Columbia](#)

The findings make it clear that limited access to free menstrual products in our community places an undue burden on the lives of people who menstruate, particularly people who are Indigenous, live with a disability, or are members of low-income families. It also showed us that community organizations are a valuable tool in addressing the issue. Of the twelve partnering organizations who participated in the research project, 10 had clients tell them that free products made their lives more affordable, and 9 had clients tell them about how it improved their mental and physical well-being.

We've seen some important successes so far. Ontario's Ministry of Education has committed to providing free and zero-stigma access to menstrual products in public schools across the province. The Ontario Government will distribute six million free menstrual products per year to school boards under a new and innovative partnership.⁴ This is the first step in shifting policy change and providing equitable and free access to menstrual products in the community.

But we can do more.

We're engaged with a national movement and having exciting conversations with municipalities across the province about how we can be involved in making menstrual products more readily accessible in our communities. **To support these efforts, we are providing a sample motion and backgrounder that can go to your Council. They outline what we hope your municipality may consider implementing and why it would be beneficial to community.** You will find this document attached to this email.

With Period Promise, United Way aims to eradicate period poverty. We do this by promoting equitable access to period products, encouraging policy change and supporting organizations that have made a commitment to provide menstrual products by signing onto the Period Promise Policy. There are more than 20 organizations in Niagara who have signed the [Period Promise Policy](#), becoming Period Promise Champions, but there is also significant room for improvement.

I invite you to work with your Councillors and staff to determine how your municipality may be able to contribute to this movement. I would be delighted to speak with you further about how United Way Niagara can partner with you to support policy change, equitable and inclusive access to menstrual products for all, and improve the overall health and well-being of community members. Visit www.periodpromiseniagara.com or contact me at any time for additional information. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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⁴ [Ontario Launches Free Menstrual Products In Schools](#)