

March 8th, 2022

The Honourable Jill Dunlop
Minister of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

**RE: JOINT STATEMENT ON PROMOTING MENSTRUAL EQUITY IN ONTARIO
POST - SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Dear Minister Dunlop,

As members of society and government have begun looking and working towards a post-COVID society, it is critical that we ensure that each and every barrier that existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that was exacerbated by the pandemic is no longer an impediment to the most vulnerable in society. Addressing this rising issue of period poverty – the inability to afford period products – is something that requires immediate action, and now.

I'd like to thank your government for previously accepting our calls, requesting that the Government of Ontario provides free menstrual products in all Ontario schools. The step taken was long overdue and will truly have a huge impact on the lives of all of Ontario's students who require it. Many of our remarks in this letter will be similar to our previous statement sent to Ontario's Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce and this is due to the fact that the issue of period poverty remains in our post-secondary schools and the experiences of our college and university students is not dissimilar from their elementary and secondary school counterparts.

A report conducted by Plan International Canada found that one-third of Canadian women under the age of 25 say they've struggled to afford menstrual products. 83% say they feel their period prevents them from fully participating in activities, while 70% say they have missed school or work or have withdrawn from fully participating in social activities because of their period. We must also acknowledge that this data does not capture the experiences of trans men and gender non-binary people.

When people who menstruate don't have access to the resources and information to manage their periods safely and with dignity, they are more likely to miss school and work, face higher health risks, and struggle to reach their full potential. There should be no stigma around something as fundamental as menstruation. Menstrual products are a necessity and not a luxury.

Individuals who menstruate have not been able to focus on their education and be active participants, due to having to worry about inadequate access to tampons, pads, and other menstrual products. The lack of access to these products can negatively impact students' school attendance and their social-emotional well-being and have contributed to the stigma that

exists on menstruation. Providing all students with convenient access to free menstrual products helps to support their full participation in school activities, reduces stigma and promotes gender equality.

Although we continue to see other jurisdictions in Canada take steps to fight period poverty, there is no province that currently requires post-secondary institutions to provide free menstrual products for their students campus wide. It would be a first in Canada and Ontario is well positioned to take such a historical step. We have seen individual Colleges and Universities, such as Centennial College, Brock University, University of Toronto Scarborough & many others take action on this issue by ensuring free menstrual products are provided on their campus.

That is why the Toronto Youth Cabinet and all underlying signatories are calling on the Province of Ontario to require all post-secondary institutions in Ontario to provide free and accessible menstrual products campus wide for their students. We are also asking that all Colleges and Universities ensure that this initiative is in place by the end of 2022. We recognize that not all post-secondary institutions may have the funds to procure these products, so the government must step up and provide support if and when required. These products must not only be free of charge, but be provided in ways that also protect privacy, are barrier-free and easily accessible, are consistent in delivery and availability, and are non-stigmatizing.

The simple truth is that, for far too long we have ignored the issue about menstrual periods and that silence has hurt our young people. No young person should miss out on their education or feel stigmatized because of something that is a normal part of life for them.

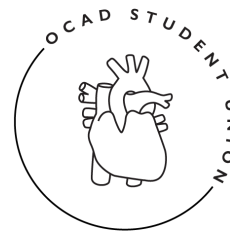
Thank you Minister Dunlop for your attention on this matter. We hope for immediate action on this. Let us continue to work towards period parity in all of Ontario's educational institutions, so that our students are able to focus and thrive and reach their full potential without barriers.

CC: Premier of Ontario Doug Ford
Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues Jane McKenna
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Michael A. Tibollo
Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities Goldie Ghamari
Leader, Official Opposition, Andrea Horwath
Colleges and Universities Critic, Laura Mae Lindo
Women's Issues Critic, Jill Andrew

Sincerely,

1. Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC)
2. YWCA Ontario (Coalition of all Ontario YWCA's)
3. Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance
4. College Student Alliance
5. York Federation of Students

6. University of Toronto (Scarborough, Mississauga and St. George Campus Student Unions)
7. Ryerson Students' Union
8. Algoma University Students' Union
9. Brock University Students' Union
10. Central Student Association - University of Guelph
11. Nipissing University Student Union
12. Ontario Tech Student Union
13. University of Ottawa Students' Union
14. Trent Central Student Association
15. University Students' Council - Western University
16. McMaster Students Union
17. Lakehead University Student Union
18. Laurentian University Students' General Association
19. OCAD Student Union
20. Alma Mater Society - Queen's University Student Government
21. University of Windsor Students' Alliance
22. Carleton University Students' Association
23. Canadore Students' Council
24. Centennial College Student Association Inc.
25. Conestoga Students Inc.
26. Student Union of Confederate College
27. Fanshawe Student Union
28. Fleming College Student Administrative Council
29. Georgian College Students' Association
30. Lambton College Student Administrative Council
31. Sheridan Student Union
32. Loyalist Student Government
33. Cambrian Student Council
34. Student Association of George Brown College
35. Association Étudiante De La Cité
36. IGNITE
37. Durham College Student Association
38. Northern College Student Association
39. Student Union of Confederation College
40. Mohawk Students' Union
41. St. Clair Student Representative Council
42. Cornwall Student Union
43. Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario
44. The Period Purse
45. Seneca Student Federation



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY



