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Councillor Wong-Tam's Statement on City of Toronto Funding for Menstrual Equity

Today the Executive Committee voted to increase the 2019 Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Budget by a quantum of \$222,359, to fund access to menstrual hygiene supplies for low-income menstruators.

This historic new funding will be available to City-administered shelters, drop-in and respite centres, as well as 'Strong Neighbourhood' community centres for the specific purchase of menstrual hygiene supplies and washroom dispensers.

City Council will vote on the final budget on March 7, and the timing of this funding increase is especially poignant, as it coincides with the upcoming International Women's Day on March 8 – a day when we celebrate and reflect on the struggles and achievements of women.

Menstrual Equity is an important part of a larger goal - to bring a gender equity lens to governmental budget processes. It is important that we continue the conversation about equitable investment in programs and services accessed by women, girls, Trans and non-binary individuals. We must analyze and address the hidden financial inequities that are causing women and their families to be left behind.

In June 2018, City Council voted overwhelmingly in favour of my motion to explore the costs of providing free access to menstrual supplies, through the 2019 budget process. I am proud that we have followed through in devoting real dollars to meet the need. It is clear that this is an issue that speaks to all Members of Council. Working together, we have taken another step, in ensuring free access to essential products for low-income menstruators, now and in the future.

Throughout the next few months, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) staff will be consulting with service providers, program participants, and menstrual equity advocates, to gain a better understanding of how the City can improve on the provision of menstrual hygiene supplies, in 2020 and beyond. I look forward to this process and the pending report to the Economic and Community Development Committee in May 2019 as we will continue to move forward on this critical issue.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the service providers, program participants and advocates including those from the Period Purse, Progress Toronto, Sistering, Fred Victor, Windermere United Church, Kennedy House Youth Shelter, Street Haven, Toronto Drop-In Network, Toronto Shelter Network, Shopper's Drug Mart, Paradigm PR, Carol-Ann Granatstein, and former Councillor Sarah Doucette who have been working tirelessly on this issue, as well as to SSHA staff, Budget Chief Crawford, Mayor Tory, and fellow City Councillors.

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