



Head Office:

247 Whitewood Avenue, Unit 43
PO Box 1090
New Liskeard, ON P0J 1P0
Tel.: 705-647-4305 Fax: 705-647-5779

Branch Offices:

Englehart Tel.: 705-544-2221 Fax: 705-544-8698
Kirkland Lake Tel.: 705-567-9355 Fax: 705-567-5476

www.timiskaminghu.com

September 6, 2023

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Delivered via email: premier@ontario.ca

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier
Minister of Health
Delivered via email: sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

Dear Premier Ford and Deputy Premier and Minister Jones:

Re: Universal, No-cost Coverage for all Prescription Contraceptive Options for all Ontarians

On September 6, 2023, at a regular meeting of the Board for the Timiskaming Health Unit, the Board considered the correspondence from Chatham-Kent Public Health regarding *Universal, No-cost Coverage for all Prescription Contraceptive Options for all Ontarians* and passed the following motion:

Motion 42R-2023):

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Timiskaming Health Unit Board of Health recognizes the importance of access to contraception and menstrual products for all Ontarians; and

FURTHER THAT the Board encourages the Provincial government to cover the cost of all contraceptive options for all Ontario residents; and

FURTHER THAT the Premier of Ontario and Deputy Premier be so advised.

The Timiskaming Health Unit fully supports the above recommendation, and thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacy Wight, Board of Health Chair

April 25, 2023

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Delivered via email: premier@ontario.ca

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier
Minister of Health
Delivered via email: sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

Dear Premier Ford and Deputy Premier and Minister Jones:

RE: Universal, No-cost Coverage for all Prescription Contraceptive Options to all People Living in Ontario

At its meeting held on March 15, 2023, the Chatham-Kent Board of Health passed the following motion:

“That Administration prepare a letter of advocacy to the Provincial government encouraging them to cover the cost of birth control for all Ontario residents, and that this letter be copied to alPHa and any other appropriate partners.”

It is estimated that 30-40% of all pregnancies in Canada are unintended with those of lower socioeconomic status being one of the leading vulnerable groups impacted¹. Timely access to effective contraception directly influences the rate of unintended pregnancies. In Canada, cost is the leading barrier preventing individuals from gaining access to effective contraceptives^{2/3}. Cost should not be a barrier Ontarians face to obtain consistent and timely access to effective contraceptives.

OHIP+ has begun to address this issue in Ontario by providing no cost coverage for anyone under the age of 25 who is not covered by a private plan. This coverage needs to be expanded to all Ontarians without the restrictions put on those with private plans or those over the age of 24. Ontarians should have universal, no-cost, confidential access to effective contraceptives.

At the beginning of April, British Columbia started the journey of providing prescription contraceptive access equality for their province and we are advocating for Ontario in this journey.

.../2

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We stand firmly in support of protecting and advancing sexual and reproductive health rights.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Brock McGregor
Chair, Chatham-Kent Board of Health

Copy to:

Hon. Monte McNaughton, MPP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Trevor Jones, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Leamington

Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aLPHa)
Ontario Public Health Units

- 1 Nethery E, Schummers L, Maginley S, Dunn S and Norman W. "Household income and contraceptive methods among female youth: a cross sectional study using the Canadian Community Health Survey (2009-2010 And 2013-2014)". CMAJ Open, vol. 7, no. 4, 2019 Retrieved from www.cmajopen.ca/content/7/4/E646
- 2 Hulme Jennifer, et al. "Barriers and Facilitators to Family Planning Access in Canada." Healthcare Policy, Politiques De Sante, vol 10, no.3, 2015, pp. 48-63., doi:10.12927/hcpol.2015.24169
- 3 Black, Amanda Y., et al. "The Cost of Unintended Pregnancies in Canada: Estimating Direct Cost, Role of Imperfect Adherence, and the Potential Impact of Increased Use of Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives." Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada, vol. 37, no. 12, 2015.pp. pp. 1086-1097., doi:101016/s1701-2163(16)30074-3.

May 17, 2023

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
premier@ontario.ca

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier
Minister of Health
sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Jones:

Re: Universal, No-cost Coverage for all Prescription Contraceptive Options for all Ontarians

At its May 10, 2023 meeting, the Board of Health for Peterborough Public Health considered correspondence from Chatham-Kent Public Health regarding universal, no-cost coverage for all prescription contraceptive options for all Ontarians, and expressed its support for this initiative.

As noted in correspondence sent earlier this year by our Medical Officer of Health & Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Thomas Piggott, to the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health on International Women's Day, this measure will improve health for women, girls, and gender-diverse people by bridging gaps in access to contraception and menstrual products.

Equitable access to contraception and menstrual products is a human rights and health equity issue, yet many Ontarians face barriers accessing these products due to factors such as cost, geography, availability of healthcare services, and education.

Canada is the only country in the world with universal health care that does not offer public coverage for contraception. Recent data shows that 1 in 5 Canadians lack sufficient access to drug coverage required to obtain medications needed to support their reproductive and sexual health.

On April 1, British Columbia became the first province in Canada to offer free prescription contraception for all residents. The province covers the cost of prescription contraception, including oral hormone pills, contraceptive injections, copper and hormonal intrauterine devices, subdermal (under-the-skin) implants, and emergency contraceptives (often known as the 'morning-after' pill or Plan B). I would encourage you to consider similar action to improve access to free contraception in Ontario.

Current research also reveals that many Canadians struggle to afford menstrual products, an issue that is often referred to as period poverty. Recent estimates from the Federal Government suggests menstrual products can cost up to \$6,000 over an individual's lifetime, and that 1 in 3 Canadians struggle to afford products such as pads, tampons, and liners.

I applaud the Government of Ontario for the recent expanded public access to contraception and menstrual products for eligible populations. However, I note that beyond school settings gaps in access remain. In particular, evidence shows that marginalized communities, including refugees, sex workers, trans and non-binary people, Indigenous communities, people experiencing homelessness, and people living in rural and remote areas, continue to face challenges accessing these necessities.

The inability to afford basic necessities such as tampons, pads and liners fuel stigma and shame while creating health risks for people who struggle to afford them. This shows that efforts to advance reproductive justice and sexual health are linked to income inequality and resolving the factors that prevent people accessing their basic needs. Gender equity is a public health issue, but it is also all of our issue to address.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day, *Embrace Equity for Women*, spoke clearly to the public health issues of free access to contraception and menstrual products. I trust you will consider our efforts, as well as the advocacy of others, who continue to voice their support to ensure equitable access to all.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Councillor Kathryn Wilson
Chair, Board of Health

/ag

cc: Local MPPs
Ontario Boards of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aPHa)