



Conor Lloyd Speech

***IMPORTANT:** This is a fictional news conference: all materials are fictional.

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*Check against delivery.

Hello everyone. I'm Conor Lloyd, Director of College and Public Relations at Red River College Polytechnic. Thank you for taking the time to be here with us today.

As the father of a 3-year-old girl, I tend to look at the world through this lens of what life is going to be like for her as she grows up.

I want to know how I can help create a more accessible, inclusive, and barrier-free world for her and other people's children to grow up in.

I'd like to ask you to imagine you're sitting in the middle of class and your nose begins to run. What do you do? You walk to the front of class, grab a tissue, and return to your studies.

For people who menstruate, things aren't always that easy.

Eighty-six per cent of people who menstruate have started their period in public without access to the menstrual products they need to function throughout the day. On average, Canadians who menstruate spend up to six thousand dollars on menstrual products in their lifetime.

That's the equivalent of almost two terms of college education.

Even worse, Canadians who live in more remote and Northern communities can expect to pay double the price.

So, if you aren't lucky enough to afford to purchase products on break, you're forced to use less hygienic means or go home and miss out on the education you would have gotten had they been made accessible to you.

At Red River College Polytechnic, we are committed to providing barrier-free access to our educational programs, services, and facilities.

Barriers faced by students don't start and stop with financial support. We recognize that wrap-around supports also include things like childcare, transportation, medical care, and personal hygiene products.

That's why I'm pleased to announce, effective January 4, 2022, RRC Polytech will be the first college in Canada to equip all bathroom stalls on campuses with free menstrual products. To use the dispensers, students will turn the knob, the product will be dispensed, and an internal timer will lock the dispenser for three minutes to prevent anyone from taking all the products at once and leaving the next student without menstrual products.

Since there are currently no machines on the market that can provide this for us, we put out a Request for Proposals over the summer. We received a number of competitive bids, but one stood out against the others.

We are excited about the opportunity to collaborate with two Red River College Polytechnic graduates, Aldin Sabic and Mackayla Essery, who invented the menstrual supply dispenser we will be using.

We hope that in providing these products to students free of cost, students will no longer be forced to choose between their education and their hygiene.

When New York City schools started offering free menstrual products in their bathrooms, attendance increased by 2.4 per cent.

Seventy per cent of Canadian women say they've missed school or work because of their period.

Recognizing that not all those who menstruate identify as female, the dispensers will be available in every stall to ensure accessibility and discretion for all students.

Removing this barrier from students is an important step in continuing to create a safe and accessible community at RRC Polytech.

We don't expect students to bring their own toilet paper, facial tissues, hand soap, or paper towel with them to school... So why should we expect those who account for nearly half of the students to bring their own hygiene products?

No one should have to choose between personal hygiene and their education.

Red River College Polytechnic values inclusivity and embraces the uniqueness of all community members.

Creating gender-neutral washrooms in this very building was one of the many steps we've taken to remove barriers for students.

Red River College Polytechnic is dedicated to creating accessible and barrier-free education. We believe providing free and accessible menstrual products is a crucial step to take in creating that environment for students.