

October 25, 2023



Re: Safeguarding Access to Dental Care in Canada

Dear MP,

Canada's provincial and territorial dental associations represent more than 25,500 dentists, who treat more than 30 million Canadians every year¹ and employ at least 50,000² oral health care workers.

We, the undersigned, want an effective, sustainable, and successful Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) that we can all be proud of. Working together, if we get the details right, the proposed CDCP has the potential to improve the oral and overall health of the one-third of Canadians without dental insurance³. If we get the details wrong, there will be serious unintended consequences and access to oral health care in Canada will be undermined for generations.

With only two months to go before the CDCP becomes available to uninsured Canadians under 18, persons with disabilities, and seniors who have an annual family income of less than \$90,000, we lack answers to our critical questions.

How will the Government of Canada...

- Safeguard employer-provided dental plans that two-thirds of Canadians currently have access to?
- Ensure that a strong federal program can be coordinated with existing public programs (e.g. federal, provincial and municipal)?
- Protect patient choice and maintain the patient-provider relationship?
- Ensure minimal, efficient administration that promotes timely access to care?
- Respect the costs of delivering dental care to maximize provider participation?
- Increase the number of dental assistants and dental hygienists to meet the demands of the CDCP?

We've raised these questions with Health Canada, but we have no indication that we are being heard. We are extremely concerned that the potential for the success of the CDCP – including the ability to maintain and grow jobs in the dental workforce – is being compromised by a lack of meaningful consultation with the dentists we represent – *those who will be expected to deliver on the government's promises*. We are in the dark, so what do you expect us to say to our patients and your constituents?

Canada's dentists want to champion a CDCP that will respect patients, providers and taxpayers. We can't do that until we know the Government of Canada's answers to the questions posed above. We ask that you pose these to the Minister of Health and, if you can't get answers, ask that we take the time to get it right and focus on what is best for Canadians.



continued...

¹ Statistics Canada. Quarterly population estimate by percentage of Canadians reporting a visit to a dentist per year.

² Canadian Institute for Health Information. Health Workforce in Canada, 2017 to 2021: Overview – Data Tables. CIHI notes that women continue to play a vital role in the health workforce, representing the vast majority of dental assistants and dental hygienists.


³ Statistics Canada. Health Fact Sheets: Dental Care, 2018.



Canada's dentists are prepared to champion an expansion of the interim measure already in place – the Canada Dental Benefit. This establishes a fixed dollar amount that a patient can use to be reimbursed for dental-related expenses. A recent survey commissioned by Health Canada found that nearly nine out of 10 Canadians support the benefit⁴. In fact, other survey work suggests that the majority of Canadians⁵ would support an oral health spending account as a permanent solution.

Canada's provincial and territorial dental associations look forward to continuing working with the Government of Canada to improve the oral and overall health of Canadians. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to reach out directly to the appropriate contact listed below.

Signatories



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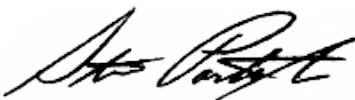
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cc: Canadian Dental Association

4 The Strategic Counsel: Canada Dental Benefit Baseline Survey (March, 2023). Prepared for Health Canada.

5 Abacus Data: Survey 2023. Prepared for the Canadian Dental Association.