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## **Dentists and their patients still have questions about the Canadian Dental Care Plan**

### **MEDIA RELEASE: Canada's Provincial and Territorial Dental Associations**

TORONTO, Dec. 11, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- After today's announcement that eligible seniors will be invited to apply for enrollment in the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) starting this month, and care could begin as early as May 2024, many questions remain. It is unclear how this new program will affect patients and dentists across the country. The CDCP will only succeed if the federal government taps into the expertise of practising dentists, through their provincial and territorial dental associations, right at the start.

The CDCP is intended to help millions of people without dental benefits access essential oral health care. Although this is an historic investment, the CDCP has been developed under tight timelines and with limited involvement of practising dentists. It is critical that the government has a full understanding of the impact it will have on patients trying to access the program.

Despite an announcement about the start of patient enrollment, Canadians still don't know:

- Will I be allowed to choose my own dentist?
- Will the plan replace my current work, school and/or group dental benefits?
- What will happen to any other public dental programs that I am already eligible for?
- Will the plan be easy to use or will there be needless administrative hurdles and red tape?
- What will I have to pay for my dental care?

Patients are already asking their dentists these questions, but the answers they need from the federal government aren't yet clear.

Since the first federal announcement almost two years ago, dental associations have clearly said they know how to build a plan that will work for patients, dentists, and taxpayers. As experts in oral healthcare delivery, dentists across Canada prepared their advice to the federal government in [A Proposed Framework for the Canadian Dental Care Plan](#), which was shared publicly in November. The comprehensive and actionable framework is based on decades of data, research and expert input from practising dentists across regions and specialties. It outlines ways in which the CDCP could be successfully implemented.

While some of the information was considered by Health Canada, the dental associations see some important concerns and gaps that need to be filled. Recently, the dental associations met with Health Canada to outline this framework and their remaining questions. Today's announcement reveals that there is still more to discuss and much more work to be done before the plan can launch.

In the meantime, to address some of the immediate concerns surrounding the CDCP, the provincial and territorial dental associations:

- Remind patients not to delay treatments or dental appointments. Regular checkups now can help catch problems before they become painful and expensive to treat.
- Strongly encourage employers and other groups to keep the dental benefits for their employees and members, so they don't lose access to care.
- Urge the government to implement a coordinated plan to increase skilled labour for dental offices. Without it, patients could face delays in getting the dental care they need.

Dental associations look forward to working with federal government officials to help them with their implementation plans for the CDCP. Dentists want to help make great access to care a reality for everyone.

## Quotes

“Access to dental care will only improve if patients understand how to use this plan, if it will impact their current dental coverage, and if dentists know how to administer it. The sooner the federal government can answer these questions, the sooner patients can benefit from the program.”

– *Dr. Bruce Yaholnitsky, President, Alberta Dental Association*

“Today’s announcement is a significant milestone in the development of the Government of Canada’s Canadian Dental Care Plan. Given the proven relationship between oral and general health, this plan is an unprecedented opportunity to improve the overall health of Canadians, including providing essential access to care for vulnerable populations. While many questions remain unanswered about the final details of the plan, the BC Dental Association is encouraged by the discussions thus far and remains hopeful that the Government of Canada will deliver a plan that works for patients, providers, and taxpayers.”

– *Dr. Rob Wolanski, President, BC Dental Association*

“The dentists of Canada recognize the historic impact the CDCP can have on oral healthcare. We feel the success of this program relies on the collaboration of government with oral healthcare professionals to answer questions that directly affect access to care for eligible Canadians.”

– *Dr. Scott Leckie, President, Manitoba Dental Association*

“New Brunswick dentists support a government plan that fully meets patient needs and covers treatment costs; is easy to access and to use and will co-exist with already established benefits plans.”

– *Dr. Joannah Campbell, President, New Brunswick Dental Society*

“As the dentists of Canada, our primary focus is always Canadians’ oral health, and therefore, overall health. We are cautiously optimistic about the CDCP and want to stress the importance of collaboration between the government and all oral health professionals.”

– *Dr. Shane Roberts, President, Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Association*

“Dentists in Nova Scotia support government initiatives that extend access to care for vulnerable populations. But we’re aware that successful programs need to work for everyone, patients and the providers of care.”

– *Dr. Juli Waterbury, President, Nova Scotia Dental Association*

“This a huge opportunity we simply can’t afford to get wrong. We’ve said time and time again, the government must listen to dentists – who actually deliver the care – to fill the gaps in their planning. Let’s work together to make the CDCP one of Canada’s greatest public health achievements. Ontarians and all Canadians are depending on it.”

– *Dr. Brock Nicolucci, President, Ontario Dental Association*

“The introduction of a federal dental care plan finally acknowledges the long-known fact that oral health is a key pillar of overall systemic health. The dentists of Prince Edward Island welcome the potential for improved access to care among underserved populations and are looking forward to learning more about how the massive federal investment will benefit Canadians. We hope that the government plan will support the highest quality of care that Islanders are accustomed to.”

– *Dr. Matt Shaffner, President, Dental Association of Prince Edward Island*

“The College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan appreciates the initiative of Health Canada to fill the gaps in access to dental care for Canadians. Collaboration with Canadian oral health care providers during development will be key in determining the long-term success of the program.”

– *Dr. Derek Thiessen, President, College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan*

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