



THE CANADIAN DENTAL  
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

For immediate release (Offert en français sur demande)

## Media Release

### Health Minister's Mandate Letter Advances National Dental Care in Canada

December 16, 2019 (Ottawa, ON) — The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) supports Prime Minister Trudeau's instructions to the Hon. Patty Hajdu, minister of health, to work with Parliament to study the possibility of national dental care.

"More access to preventive oral care could significantly reduce pressure on Canada's acute health care system," explains Leanne Huvenaars, president of CDHA. "Dental care in Canada is currently based on ability to pay rather than need. A national dental care program would improve accessibility and enhance preventive oral care for millions of Canadians."

While national dental care is being studied, there are immediate steps that can be taken to improve the oral health of Canadians, particularly for those who face barriers to care. The federal government should allocate resources to expand the Children's Oral Health Initiative (COHI) to more regions and to a wider age range. Doing so will reduce medical transportation expenditures, enhance health care delivery, and improve health outcomes in Indigenous communities. Huvenaars, a Métis dental hygienist, knows first-hand that Jordan's principle, which aims to ensure that Indigenous children have access to all public services without delay or disruption, currently has too many steps and barriers that hinder access to dental care.

In addition, the federal government should work with provincial partners to implement national guidelines for preventive oral care in long-term care facilities, which will counter the growing problem of poor oral health among Canada's seniors.

"We look forward to sharing the expertise of Canada's dental hygienists with Parliament and to helping close the gaps in oral care nationally," says Huvenaars.

CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 29,549 dental hygienists in Canada, directly representing 20,000 individual members, including students. Since 1963, CDHA has worked to advance the profession and promote the importance of oral health. Dental hygiene is the sixth largest registered health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including independent dental hygiene practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca).

Angie D'Aoust, Director of Marketing and Communications  
1-800-267-5235 ext. 134, or by email [adaoust@cdha.ca](mailto:adaoust@cdha.ca)

[www.cdha.ca](http://www.cdha.ca)

