



August 23, 2022

## MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

### **Canadian Dental Hygienists Association on Federal Dental Program**

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The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) is the collective national voice of more than 30,000 dental hygienists in Canada. Dental hygienists are primary oral health care professionals who provide clinical assessments and therapy, oral health education, and offer health promotion strategies to people of all ages.

We know that many vulnerable people in Canada face barriers that limit their access to oral health coverage and that's why CDHA has long advocated for increasing access to preventive oral health services as our top priority.

CDHA was very pleased to see the federal government's announcement to reduce cost barriers to accessing dental care for roughly 7 to 9 million Canadians who are currently without insurance or do not have the ability to pay out of pocket. CDHA's main concerns are about the design and implementation of the new federal program.

- **Deliver direct support to vulnerable Canadians within a national model**

CDHA strongly supports the federal administration and delivery of the new program to ensure a reasonable standard that applies for all eligible people across the country. And when it comes to making life more affordable for millions of eligible Canadians with low incomes, they should not have to pay up front to access oral health care services.

- **Expanding existing provincial/territorial dental programs is not sufficient**

There are many shortfalls within the existing patchwork of public dental programs at the provincial/territorial level. Where programs are available, many vulnerable Canadians do not qualify for coverage leaving them with unmet needs. At the same time, many programs are limited in the scope of preventive services covered and fail to recognize dental hygienists as eligible providers, thus limiting accessibility to oral health care.

- **Prevention is key**

Canada's dental hygienists understand that oral hygiene impacts overall health, and that prevention is key. As essential oral health care providers, dental hygienists work every day to prevent and treat oral conditions and diseases by providing individualized preventive and therapeutic oral care services and treatments. And when we consider the health system and societal impacts related to untreated and late-treated oral conditions and diseases, we believe the case for emphasizing prevention within all publicly financed oral health/dental programs is clear.

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

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## Quotes

- “It’s essential that the new federal dental program recognize the importance of preventive oral care for this vulnerable population. It must include reimbursement for dental hygiene services covered under the program.” -CDHA President Wendy Stewart
- “Independent dental hygienists with their own mobile equipment can travel to rural and remote communities to provide much-needed preventive and therapeutic oral care, yet many provincial and territorial oral health programs for targeted populations do not recognize them as providers.” -CDHA President Wendy Stewart
- “Dental hygienists across Canada are acutely aware that our publicly funded health care system does not reflect how crucial oral health is to overall health,” -CDHA President Wendy Stewart.

## Associated News Releases

- [CDHA Meets with Federal Health Minister](#) -June 17, 2022
- [CDHA Releases Policy Paper on A National Oral Health Care Plan for Seniors](#) -June 14, 2022
- [CDHA Discusses Dental Hygiene Care at News Conference](#) -April 13, 2022
- [CDHA Applauds Government’s Support of Increased Access to Oral Health Care](#) -April 8, 2022
- [CDHA Applauds LPC and NDP for Prioritizing Oral Health Care in Agreement](#) -March 22, 2022

## Related Resources

- [Responding to the oral health needs of residents in long-term care homes](#)
- [Policy analysis and recommendations for a pan-Canadian approach to supporting oral health coverage for low-income seniors](#)
- [Public opinion polling results on seniors’ oral health in Canada \(Abacus Data\)](#)

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