



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

Highlights from CDHA's 2023 Parliament Hill Day and kick-off to National Dental Hygienists Week™

#voice4oralhealth
#oralhealthforseniors



Recap

On March 23, CDHA board directors gathered in Ottawa to raise awareness among parliamentarians of the dental hygiene profession and access to oral health care issues. This year, there was a lot to discuss in light of the federal government's transformational investments in national dental care through the interim Canadian Dental Benefit and the long-term Canadian Dental Care Plan. Since federal investments were first announced over a year ago, dental hygienists across Canada have told us that the success of this program is vital, and that gaps in access to care are getting increasingly worse, leading to poorer health outcomes.

This year's event marked a return to in-person meetings on Parliament Hill where CDHA's board directors discussed advancements for access to preventive oral health care for Canadians through coverage for low-income Canadians, dental hygiene services in long-term care homes, and expanded services in rural and remote communities.

While CDHA staff undertake advocacy and government relations activities consistently throughout the year, annual lobby days on Parliament Hill provide the board with the opportunity to directly meet and provide insights to members of Parliament, senators, and their political staffers about the dental hygiene profession and ways to support oral health for overall health for people across Canada.

The tradition of heading to Parliament Hill to raise awareness for the dental hygiene profession is a continuation of CDHA's ongoing advocacy efforts that yield results in our members' and the public's best interest.

It's an exciting time for national oral health policy and programming in Canada! There is still a long road ahead to help ensure that people in Canada have improved and equitable access to oral care with the support of dental hygienists.

Follow CDHA's ongoing efforts in the coming weeks and months. Any questions or comments may be directed to **Juliana Jackson**, CDHA's manager of policy, research and government relations.

Public Policy Priorities

Implementation of a national dental care program for low-income Canadians

The announcement of the Canada Dental Benefit and the Canada Dental Care Plan was a result of the supply and confidence agreement between the New Democratic Party of Canada and the Liberal Party of Canada announced earlier last year. It is anticipated that these new federal investments will completely reshape access to oral health care. By the end of this year, coverage from the Canadian Dental Care Plan is expected to begin for those with an annual family income of less than \$90,000. There will be no co-pays for those with an annual family income under \$70,000. It is expected that the plan will be fully implemented by end of 2025.

CDHA's lobby day conversations were very positive, engaging, and our messages were well received. While there is still a long road ahead, CDHA has outlined the importance of continually consulting with oral health stakeholders (including national professional associations) and health system experts to ensure the program remains responsive for many years to come.

Oral health care services in long-term care (LTC) homes across the country.

As essential primary health care professionals, dental hygienists working in long-term care homes identify many oral health issues that are not spotted by other health professionals. That's why CDHA is calling on the federal government to work in collaboration with provinces, territories, and the LTC sector to make new targeted investments that address oral health care for residents living in LTC, among other comprehensive care and physical infrastructure standards to improve the quality of care.

Further to this year's publication of new national standards for Canada's LTC homes, we would also like to see a greater focus on staffing with qualified oral health professionals. CDHA's board of directors met with Seniors Minister Kamal Khera for a round table discussion about oral standards in LTC homes. Minister Khera volunteered at her local LTC home during the pandemic so her dedication and knowledge about seniors' oral health care and the community of care made for excellent discussion. While CDHA is pleased that oral care was included in the national standards for LTC, more work still needs to be done to ensure these standards are applied across Canada.

Access to oral health care in rural and remote communities

Over 6 million Canadians live in rural and remote communities and face challenges accessing the health care they need and deserve. In highlighting that dental hygienists who practice independently can bring their services directly to people in a wide range of community locations, CDHA would like to see the government's commitment to expand the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness program accelerated with the inclusion of dental hygienists in an effort to increase access to oral health care services.





Meetings

- Hon. Kamal Khera, MP for Brampton West; Minister of Seniors
- Adam Van Koeverden, MP for Milton; Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health
- Jagmeet Singh, MP for Burnaby South; NDP Leader
- Don Davies, MP for Vancouver Kingsway; NDP Health Critic
- Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor MP for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe; Minister of Official Languages and Atlantic Economic Opportunity
- Kevin Waugh, MP for Saskatoon—Grasswood
- Laila Goodridge, MP for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake
- Michael McLeod, MP for Northwest Territories
- Jaime Battiste, MP for Lac-Saint-Louis
- Francis Scarpaleggia, MP for Lac-Saint-Louis
- Ya'ara Saks, MP for York Centre
- Bryan May, MP for Cambridge
- Tony Van Bynen, MP for Newmarket—Aurora
- Carol Hughes, MP for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing
- Leah Gazan, office for the MP for Winnipeg Centre
- Vance Badawey, MP for Niagara Centre
- Senator Tony Loffreda
- Francesco Sorbara, MP for Vaughan—Woodbridge
- Eric Gustavsson – Office of Hon. Carla Qualtrough, MP for Delta; Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion





CDHA Press Conference on Parliament Hill

On April 4, as a kick-off to National Dental Hygienists Week™, CDHA held a press conference on Parliament Hill. Chief Executive Officer Ondina Love and Director of Dental Hygiene Practice Sylvie Martel were on hand to share the results of a national public opinion poll on oral health care, conducted by Abacus Data on behalf of the association. Highlights included the finding that 88% of people living in Canada support the federal government's national dental care plan, and that there is a growing trend in the utilization of services of dental hygienists who own their own practices. Watch the press conference [here](#) and, for more information, download the [polling data](#), infographic in [English](#) or [French](#), and [media release](#). The event generated 17 news segments from across the country across all media - radio, television, and print, including CTV News, Globe and Mail and Toronto Star.

This year, CDHA received tremendous support from members of Parliament who made special statements in the House of Commons to acknowledge the excellent work done by dental hygienists across Canada. Watch statements from MP Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway), NDP Health Critic and MP Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville) statements can be watched [here](#).





This dental hygienist's office is a van, and her young clients are often homeless

Ottawa's new dental plan will benefit some British Columbians, but details are slim so far — including how it will help the most vulnerable

Lori Culbert

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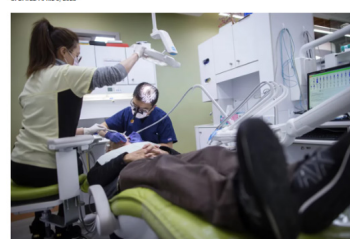
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Hygienist Heiga Thordarson in the mobile van with Hanshil Jhubb, coordinator for mobile public health. PHOTO BY FRANCIS GEORGIN / PNG

Dental hygienists prepare for influx of people who haven't had teeth cleaned for years

WARE WOLF ·
PUBLISHED APRIL 5, 2023
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Dental hygienists are expecting a surge of bookings from uninsured Canadians who may need extensive dental work and multiple sessions. DARRYL DYCK/THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Highlights from National Dental Hygienists Week™

April is Oral Health Month, and an important part of this celebration is National Dental Hygienists Week™, during April 4–10. Focusing on the importance of maintaining good oral health practices while helping Canadians to understand the role of the dental hygiene profession in preventing and treating oral health problems, this annual event is sponsored by the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA). Our theme, "Oral Health for Total Health," reminds us that taking care of our mouth, teeth, and gums has a positive impact on other aspects of our lives. This year with the launch of the interim Canada Dental Benefit, we focused specifically on the oral health of children.

More than 31,000 dental hygienists across the country came together to celebrate National Dental Hygienists Week™ in diverse and creative ways, with community outreach events, contests, classroom presentations, social media campaigns, and much more!

Support from various levels of government was also reflected this year with a total of 33 City Halls and Provincial Legislature buildings lit purple to celebrate NDHW.

For more information please contact:

Juliana Jackson | Manager of Policy, Research, and Government Relations | jjackson@cdha.ca