



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

# The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association

2019 Federal Election Brief



Priorities for  
preventive oral care

August 2019

# Canadian Dental Hygienists Association

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### CDHA priorities for preventive oral care

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) is the collective, national voice of more than 29,000 dental hygienists in Canada and the sixth largest regulated health profession in the country. We are committed to working with government to achieve results that will make our health care system more accessible and efficient.

CDHA believes that the key to a prosperous Canada lies in the health of our people. Oral health is fundamental to overall health and, ultimately, to productivity. For this reason, CDHA believes that all Canadians should have access to professional oral hygiene services.

Gaps in Canada's publicly funded health care system have left some unable to access the oral health care they need.

In the lead-up to the federal election, CDHA is proposing smart, reasonable, and necessary solutions that government can adopt to improve the oral health of Canadians. Our goal, like yours, is to ensure that oral health care can be accessed by everyone, and that those who need help the most are supported.

**Smart, reasonable, and necessary  
solutions to improve the oral and  
overall health of Canadians**

**Preventive oral  
care for seniors**

**Filling the gap for  
Indigenous children**



## Preventive oral care for seniors

**By 2031, one in four Canadians will be over age 65, with many seniors retaining most, if not all, of their natural teeth.**

Imagine not being able to brush your own teeth. Imagine having a toothache that worsens to the point of requiring emergency room care. Sadly, this is reality for many Canadian seniors because support for preventive dental hygiene care and daily mouth care is lacking. Because most oral diseases are preventable, it makes sense to develop new models of oral care that will limit the added pressures placed on the acute care system. It's time for all levels of government to promote innovative solutions to bring oral health care to people rather than bringing people to care.

**Statistics indicate that Canadians between the ages of 60 and 79 are 40% less likely to have private dental insurance compared to the general population.** As a result, older Canadians tend to be less frequent users of oral care services.

**Long-term care residents in particular have a high prevalence of untreated oral disease.** These preventable oral diseases frequently result in more costly emergency procedures.

### WHAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN DO:

#### **Support oral care for low-income seniors**

The federal government can take needed action to incentivize provinces and territories to **develop preventive oral care supports for low-income seniors**. Provinces and territories that establish and deliver oral care supports for low-income seniors would receive additional transfer funding from the federal government for these initiatives.

#### **Partner with provinces and territories on long-term care guidelines**

The federal government, in partnership with provincial governments, oral care professionals, and key stakeholders, can develop long-term care (LTC) and home care **guidelines for daily mouth care as well as regular professional preventive care**. The federal government can provide additional transfer funding to those provinces and territories that implement the LTC guidelines.

## Filling the gap for Indigenous children

**First Nations and Inuit oral health is far worse than that of the general population.** For example, dental day surgery rates for children from Indigenous communities are close to nine times higher than those for children from non-Indigenous populations. Unfortunately, preventive dental hygiene services and programs are not readily available in Indigenous communities, a situation that contributes to the development of more serious oral conditions requiring treatment in large urban centres.

**It is far more costly and much less effective to provide oral health care after oral diseases arise than it is to provide essential preventive care in communities.**

The high medical transportation costs of flying Indigenous peoples in and out of their communities for treatment of health and oral health conditions are of great concern to dental hygienists because many oral diseases can be prevented through cost-effective, community-based professional oral health care.

### WHAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN DO:

#### **Provide essential preventive care in communities**

To reduce medical transportation expenditures, enhance health care delivery, and improve health outcomes for all Indigenous peoples, the federal government can **allocate resources to expand the Children's Oral Health Initiative (COHI) to other regions and to a wider age range, and increase dental benefit coverage for preventive dental hygiene services in Indigenous communities.**

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## Related links

### For CDHA members

- CDHA Advocacy Toolkit – 2019 Federal Election Edition [www.cdha.ca/electiontoolkit](http://www.cdha.ca/electiontoolkit)

### For supporting government and stakeholder relations

- Registered dental hygienists in Canada (fact sheet) [www.cdha.ca/DidYouKnowDH](http://www.cdha.ca/DidYouKnowDH)
- Preventive oral care for seniors (info sheet) [www.cdha.ca/seniors](http://www.cdha.ca/seniors)
- Increasing access to preventive oral care for First Nations and Inuit peoples (info sheet) [www.cdha.ca/IndigenousOralCare](http://www.cdha.ca/IndigenousOralCare)

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