

Dental care plan a generational chance for change

Canada has taken historic strides in dental care and accessibility to help vulnerable people across the country.

The federal government's dental care plan taps into a core Canadian value: caring for each other and our most vulnerable populations. The historic plan takes care of Canadians' oral health on a more equitable basis to support vulnerable people across the country.

On June 27, Health Minister Mark Holland announced an extension of the dental care program to provide coverage for children under the age of 18 and people with a valid Canada Disability Tax Credit. This is in addition to the coverage seniors have already been receiving. Holland and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh marked the occasion as a game changer in people's lives.

As of May 1, the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) began delivering services to eligible seniors without dental insurance. According to Health Canada, over two million Canadians have signed up for the plan, and over 200,000 have already received care. Many Canadians now have access to the dental care they need and did not previously have access to, which is a significant achievement.

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) is the voice of dental hygienists in Canada, representing over 31,000 professionals nationwide. Our organization has long advocated for the advancement and promotion of increased access to preventive oral health care. This includes raising awareness about the importance of oral health for overall health, and highlighting access. Dental hygienists are on the front lines of providing high quality, preventive oral health care. They work in various practice settings, including dental hygiene clinics, long-term care facilities, patient homes, and schools. They also work closely with their patients/clients, providing preventive and therapeutic services. It's why dental hygienists understand that accessing dental care is unattainable for many vulnerable Canadians.

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CDHA is committed to continuing its work with the health minister and all Members of Parliament to advance patient eligibility, promote dental hygienists' enrolment rates for the CDCP to help contribute to increasing access to services and improving oral health outcomes of people across Canada. We know that the success of this program will depend on the participation of dental professionals. Dental hygienists have signed up in record numbers, and we are encouraging others to do so as well. Canadians struggling to afford oral health will have the important opportunity to access high-quality dental care.

All Canadians—including MPs and Senators—must consider what is at stake: if this program is done right, future generations will look back and thank the government. Just like we thank Tommy Douglas for his role in making universal health care happen



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