



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

For immediate release (Offert en français sur demande)

Media Release

Dental Hygienists Celebrate Major Advocacy Win with Launch of Expanded Student Loan Forgiveness Program

January 7, 2026 (OTTAWA) — The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) is proud to share a landmark achievement for our profession and for the next generation of oral health care providers. After more than ten years of sustained advocacy, the Government of Canada has officially expanded the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Program to include dental hygienists working in eligible rural and remote communities.

This long-awaited enhancement represents a significant step forward for dental hygienists who choose to practise in communities where access to oral health services is limited. It also underscores the federal government's recognition of the essential role dental hygienists play in advancing oral health equity. CDHA President Donna Lee reports, "We have consistently emphasized that financial barriers should not prevent new graduates from choosing to work where they are needed most."

About the Expanded Loan Forgiveness Program

According to the Government of Canada, the program provides federal student loan forgiveness to borrowers who work as dental hygienists in eligible communities across the country. Loan forgiveness applies to the federal portion of a Canada Student Loan and can be accessed while in repayment, during studies, or within the six-month non-repayment period.

Eligible communities

As of November 6, 2024, the definition of an eligible community has changed. For the purposes of loan forgiveness, it is defined as: a rural area, or a population centre with no more than 30,000 people living in it.

What This Means for Dental Hygienists

This program has the potential to:

- Reduce financial strain for early career dental hygienists

- Encourage more graduates to practise in underserved communities
- Strengthen access to preventive oral health services across Canada

CDHA will continue to monitor implementation details and support dental hygienists as more information becomes available.

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About the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA):

CDHA is the national voice of dental hygienists in Canada. Representing nearly 34,000 dental hygienists across the country, CDHA advocates for the advancement and promotion of the dental hygiene profession while maintaining a commitment to the public's oral health. Dental hygiene is the sixth largest regulated health profession in Canada, with professionals working as practitioners, practice owners, educators, researchers, administrators, and more. Dental hygienists are a pivotal component of Canada's health care landscape, dedicated to improving oral health and overall well-being. For more information on oral health, visit dentalhygienecanada.ca. For more information on the work of CDHA, visit cdha.ca.

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