



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

CDHA's Virtual Parliament Hill Day 2022 **#oralhealth4totalhealth**

Ondina Love (she/her)

Malid Jowhari

Lulana (she/her) | Cdn Dental Hygienists Assoc.



Laying the Groundwork

CDHA held its annual Parliament Hill Day this year on April 5, 2022, during National Dental Hygienists Week™. For the second year in a row, this event consisted of virtual gatherings. We kicked things off on the Monday evening (April 4) with a virtual briefing for CDHA staff and board directors, offering a political climate update on each of the parties and their leaders. This briefing occurred a few days after the Liberal Party and the NDP struck their agreement to allow the Liberals to govern with NDP support until 2025. This agreement has important ramifications for CDHA given its key plank on dental care for low-income Canadians.

Following the virtual training and excellent discussions, CDHA staff and board directors were well prepared and had the tools to advocate on CDHA's top priorities.

Priorities

The delegates for this year's Parliament Hill Day attended virtual meetings with members of Parliament, senators, and political staff to raise the profile of dental hygienists and the profession among politicians and key decision makers in government. Key topics for discussion were CDHA's recently published paper on national oral health standards for long-term care, the dental hygiene profession, and of course the recent federal announcement of a national dental care program.

In addition, CDHA board directors and staff shared stories of the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the profession.

National Oral Health Standards in Long-Term Care Homes

CDHA board directors and staff highlighted to key decisions makers in Ottawa the recommendations from the National Standards for Long-Term Care: Addressing Oral Health for Overall Health discussion paper. This paper resonated well and decision makers were keen to hear more. As essential primary health care providers, dental hygienists working in long-term care homes identify many oral health issues and concerns that are not seen by other health professionals. The five critical elements of oral health care service delivery in long-term care are: 1) care teams that include dental hygienists; 2) essential oral health services for residents; 3) oral health education for staff; 4) oral health in legislation pertaining to long-term care homes; and 5) oral health in accreditation standards for long-term care homes. The conversations were very positive on April 5. CDHA will continue to highlight these key recommendations in future meetings with decision makers.

Dental Care Plan

On March 22, the Liberal Party and NDP struck a supply and confidence agreement. In return for NDP support of the governing Liberals on all confidence votes, the government agreed to work on some key priorities of the NDP. One of these key priorities is a national dental care plan. The plan is very much in the early stages and has provided a huge opportunity for CDHA to advocate for the inclusion of dental hygienists as oral health providers in its implementation. CDHA was fortunate to have a meeting with key staff in the office of the Minister of Health on April 5 to discuss key priorities on this file. CDHA will continue to advocate for dental hygienists as essential primary health care providers and be a key stakeholder advising the government on the development of the dental care plan.





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Independent Dental Hygiene Practice

Independent dental hygiene practices continue to be a topic of interest on Parliament Hill. Many officials were not aware that dental hygienists in most provinces can practise without the supervision of a dentist. CDHA explained that the ability to practise independently gives dental hygienists the flexibility to provide oral care to populations who need it most, regardless of where they live. For that reason, dental hygienists must be recognized as oral health care providers in any national dental care program.

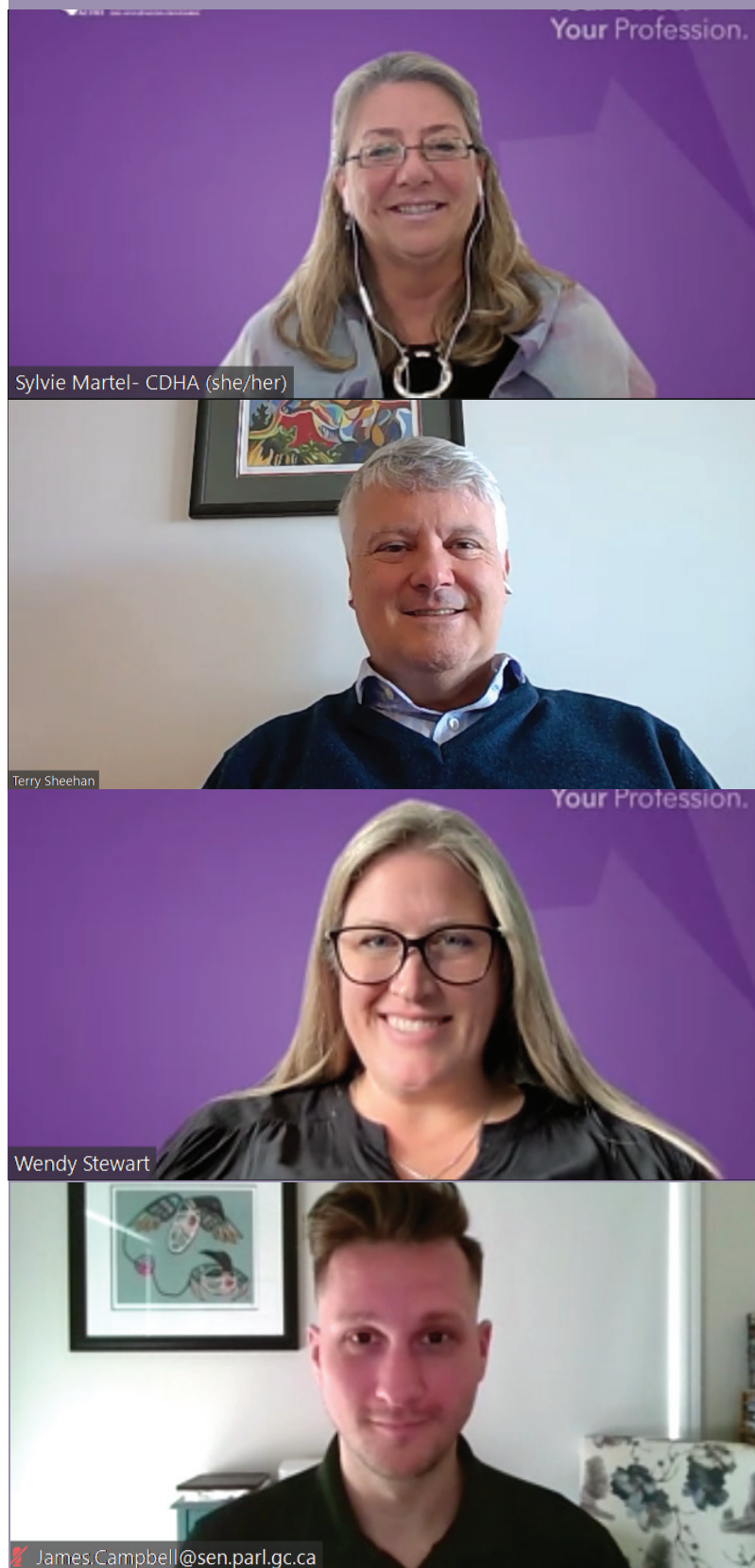
Building Relationships

CDHA is well positioned to further influence the health care agenda in Ottawa. In addition, the association continues to build stronger relationships with MPs who are very supportive of preventive oral health care. Our 'Parliament Hill Day' meetings allowed CDHA to gather more information on upcoming studies, initiatives, and opportunities for advocacy on the part of dental hygienists. CDHA hopes that the federal government will play a leadership role in working with provincial governments and key stakeholders to develop not only oral health standards for long-term care, but also a plan to provide universal dental care for seniors. We look forward to working with all parties to develop policies that will ensure access to oral care for all Canadians.

Meetings

CDHA board directors and staff met virtually with the following officials:

- Don Davies, MP for Vancouver Kingsway and NDP Health Critic
- Francesco Sorbara, MP for Vaughan-Woodbridge
- Heather McPherson, MP for Edmonton-Strathcona
- Majid Jowhari, MP for Richmond Hill
- Leah Gazan, MP for Winnipeg Centre
- Terry Sheehan, MP for Sault Ste Marie
- Paul Hershaw, Director of Operations for the Minister of Health
- Stephanie Claxton, Policy Advisor for the Minister of Health, responsible for dental care
- Adam Chambers, MP for Simcoe North
- Michael Barrett, MP for Leeds Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes; Conservative Shadow Minister of Health
- Taylor Bachrach, MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley
- Senator Mary Jane McCallum



For more information please contact:

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