

October 25, 2023

The Hon. Mark Holland, MP (Ajax)  
100 Old Kingston Road  
Suite 1  
Ajax, ON L1T 2Z9

## Re: Safeguarding Access to Dental Care in Canada

Dear Minister Holland,

Canada's provincial and territorial dental associations represent more than 25,500 dentists, who treat more than 30 million Canadians every year<sup>1</sup> and employ at least 50,000<sup>2</sup> oral health care workers.

We, the undersigned, want an effective, sustainable, and successful Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) that we can all be proud of. Working together, if we get the details right, the proposed CDCP has the potential to improve the oral and overall health of the one-third of Canadians without dental insurance<sup>3</sup>. If we get the details wrong, there will be serious unintended consequences and access to oral health care in Canada will be undermined for generations.

With only two months to go before the CDCP becomes available to uninsured Canadians under 18, persons with disabilities, and seniors who have an annual family income of less than \$90,000, we lack answers to our critical questions.

### How will the Government of Canada...

- Safeguard employer-provided dental plans that two-thirds of Canadians currently have access to?
- Ensure that a strong federal program can be coordinated with existing public programs (e.g. federal, provincial and municipal)?
- Protect patient choice and maintain the patient-provider relationship?
- Ensure minimal, efficient administration that promotes timely access to care?
- Respect the costs of delivering dental care to maximize provider participation?
- Increase the number of dental assistants and dental hygienists to meet the demands of the CDCP?

We've raised these questions with your officials, but we have no indication that we are being heard. We are extremely concerned that the potential for the success of the CDCP – including the ability to maintain and grow jobs in the dental workforce – is being compromised by a lack of meaningful consultation with the dentists we represent – *those who will be expected to deliver on the government's promises*. We are in the dark, so what do you expect us to say to our patients and your constituents?

Canada's dentists want to champion a CDCP that will respect patients, providers and taxpayers. We can't do that until we know the Government of Canada's answers to the questions posed above. We ask that you pose these to your officials and, if you can't get answers, ask that we take the time to get it right and focus on what is best for Canadians.

*continued...*

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. Quarterly population estimate by percentage of Canadians reporting a visit to a dentist per year.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information. Health Workforce in Canada, 2017 to 2021: Overview – Data Tables. CIHI notes that women continue to play a vital role in the health workforce, representing the vast majority of dental assistants and dental hygienists.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. Health Fact Sheets: Dental Care, 2018.



Canada's dentists are prepared to champion an expansion of the interim measure already in place – the Canada Dental Benefit. This establishes a fixed dollar amount that a patient can use to be reimbursed for dental-related expenses. A recent survey commissioned by Health Canada found that nearly nine out of 10 Canadians support the benefit<sup>4</sup>. In fact, other survey work suggests that the majority of Canadians<sup>5</sup> would support an oral health spending account as a permanent solution.

Canada's provincial and territorial dental associations look forward to continuing working with the Government of Canada to improve the oral and overall health of Canadians. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to reach out directly to the appropriate contact listed below.

## Signatories



Dr. Bruce Yaholnitsky, President  
**Alberta Dental Association**  
[president@albertadentalassociation.ca](mailto:president@albertadentalassociation.ca)



Dr. Juli Waterbury, President  
**Nova Scotia Dental Association**  
[nsda@bellaliant.com](mailto:nsda@bellaliant.com)



Dr. Robert Wolanski, President  
**British Columbia Dental Association**  
[president@bcdental.org](mailto:president@bcdental.org)



Dr. Brock Nicolucci, President  
**Ontario Dental Association**  
[advocacy@oda.ca](mailto:advocacy@oda.ca)



Dr. Scott Leckie, President  
**Manitoba Dental Association**  
[president@manitobadentist.ca](mailto:president@manitobadentist.ca)



Dr. Matthew Shaffner, President  
**Dental Association of Prince Edward Island**  
[dapei@eastlink.ca](mailto:dapei@eastlink.ca)



Dr. Joanah Campbell, President  
**New Brunswick Dental Society**  
[info@nbdent.ca](mailto:info@nbdent.ca)



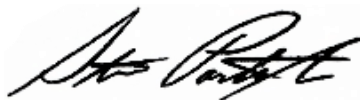
Dr. Carl Tremblay, President  
**Association des chirurgiens dentistes du Québec**  
[ctremblay@acdq.qc.ca](mailto:ctremblay@acdq.qc.ca)



Dr. Shane Roberts, President  
**Newfoundland & Labrador Dental Association**  
[info@nlda.net](mailto:info@nlda.net)



Dr. Derek Thiessen, President  
**College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan**  
[cdss@saskdentists.com](mailto:cdss@saskdentists.com)



Dr. Steven Partyka, President  
**Northwest Territories & Nunavut Dental Association**  
[DrSteveNWTNU@gmail.com](mailto:DrSteveNWTNU@gmail.com)

cc: Members of Parliament  
Canadian Dental Association

4 The Strategic Counsel: Canada Dental Benefit Baseline Survey (March, 2023). Prepared for Health Canada.

5 Abacus Data: Survey 2023. Prepared for the Canadian Dental Association.