

Checklist and Overview: A Proposed Framework for the Canadian Dental Care Plan

Dentists know what makes a good dental care program

Dentists across the country share a common goal: to promote optimal dental and oral health for all Canadians. The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) is an historic opportunity to give all people in Canada increased access to dental care. If done right, the CDCP could be one of Canada's greatest achievements in public health.

As the experts in oral health – and the healthcare providers who deliver dental care – we know what a good dental program should look like, and we want to help the federal government make the CDCP a success.

That is why dental associations across Canada came together to develop *A Proposed Framework for the Canadian Dental Care Plan*. It is a comprehensive and actionable framework for a strong dental and/oral health care program based on data, research, and input from dental experts.

A successful CDCP should:



Safeguard your access to dental care by respecting the current workplace, school and/or group dental insurance system.

Two-thirds of Canadians already enjoy world-class dental care, but some people must make difficult choices between their dental health and other important expenses. The CDCP is meant to help the latter group – providing dental care for those who don't have insurance through their work, school, or other group coverage.

If employers start cutting or ending dental care benefits for their employees, it puts the whole program – and your oral health – at risk:

- The amount of people who would be forced onto the CDCP would grow dramatically and the cost for taxpayers will skyrocket beyond the \$13 billion already budgeted.
- A family with a combined income of more than \$90,000 could be left with no benefits at all.

The government needs to make sure businesses continue to offer dental care coverage to their employees so that the CDCP can help the remaining one-third of Canadians who don't have any dental insurance.



Allow you to choose your own dentist in your community.

Patients should be able to choose their dentist. That is why the CDCP should be delivered through existing dental offices. You should be able to stay with your dentist, who knows you and your background. If you don't have a regular dentist, you should be able to choose one who practices in your community, whose office meets your needs, and who, in some cases, can speak your language.



Ensure you can access the dental care you need without having to deal with needless administrative delays and red tape.

Patients accessing care under the CDCP should be able to get the dental care they need, when they need it – the same way people with workplace benefits do. This means the CDCP should allow patients to make decisions about their own care in partnership with their dentist. It should also have easy enrollment or registration, a quick claims process, and minimal paperwork.

Most dental offices have electronic systems to submit claims and payments between patients, dentists, and insurance companies. Most people do not have to fill out forms and wait for the government to approve their care before they can receive it. An accessible public dental care program should operate in the same way.



Work with existing government dental programs so you can get the most out of the dental care you're entitled to.

Most provinces and territories already have public dental care programs for families and children with low incomes, seniors and/or people with disabilities. We know the ins-and-outs of these programs because we treat the patients who depend on them. We can help inform the federal government so that the CDCP and existing provincial/territorial government dental programs work together for the people who rely on them.



Fairly compensate the dental professionals who deliver the care.

Provincial and territorial dental associations have suggested fee guides developed by third-party experts. The suggested fee guides help dentists independently set fees for their practices that are fair, transparent, and predictable to both dentists and patients. By aligning the CDCP with the fee guides, dentists can continue to provide effective, equitable, high-quality dental care that all patients expect and deserve, regardless of their income.

In addition to the proposed framework, we urge the federal government to:



Implement a coordinated plan to increase skilled labour for dental offices.

There are already serious shortages of dental hygienists and dental assistants across Canada. The CDCP will dramatically increase staffing demands in dental practices. Without enough of these skilled professionals, you could face delays in getting the dental care you need.

Until the federal government can deliver a strong CDCP, we recommend at least a temporary expansion of an initiative that is already working for Canadians – the Canada Dental Benefit. This is a fixed dollar amount that a patient can use to be reimbursed for dental-related expenses. Nearly nine out of 10 Canadians support the Canada Dental Benefit, and public surveys suggest that most would support an oral health spending account as a permanent solution.

The dentists of Canada want to champion a CDCP that will respect patients, providers, and taxpayers. We all deserve a plan that works.