September 26, 2017

The Honourable Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins,

Re: Fluoride Varnish Programs for Children at Risk for Dental Caries

At its September 21, 2017 meeting, under Correspondence item c), the Middlesex-London Board of Health considered the attached correspondence from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) regarding alPHa Resolution A17-6, Fluoride Varnish Programs for Children at Risk for Dental Caries and voted to endorse the following:

c) Date: 2017 July 21
   Topic: Fluoride Varnish Programs for Children at Risk for Dental Caries
   From: Association of Local Public Health Agencies
   To: The Honourable Eric Hoskins

Background:
The Association for Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) adopted a resolution that called on the Government of Ontario to provide funding through the Healthy Smiles Ontario Program for the implementation of school and community-based fluoride varnish for children at risk of dental caries.

Recommendation:
Endorse.

It was moved by Mr. Trevor Hunter seconded by Ms. Maureen Cassidy, that the Board of Health endorse item c). Carried

The Middlesex-London Board of Health calls on the Government of Ontario to consider providing funding through Healthy Smiles Ontario for the implementation of school and community-based fluoride varnish programs for children at risk for dental caries.

Sincerely,

Jesse Helmer, Chair
Middlesex-London Board of Health

cc: Carmen McGregor, alPHa President
    Linda Stewart, Executive Director, alPHa
    Ontario Boards of Health
Hon. Eric Hoskins  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
10th Flr, 80 Grosvenor St,  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins,

Re: alPHa RESOLUTION A17-6, Fluoride Varnish Programs for Children at Risk for Dental Caries

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), I am writing to inform you of the attached resolution, which was adopted by our members at our annual general meeting on June 12 2017.

This resolution calls on the Government of Ontario to provide funding through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program for the implementation of school and community-based programs to use fluoride varnish to reduce the risk of tooth decay among children at risk for dental caries.

The topical application of fluoride to teeth is a well-known and effective means of preventing dental decay. The application of fluoride varnish is safe, easy and well accepted by young children and can be provided by a variety of public health and primary care workers (e.g. oral health/dental staff, physicians, nurses, medical assistants) in a variety of settings without the use of specialized equipment.

We see this as an important opportunity to further reduce the risk and incidence of dental caries in Ontario, thereby reducing the costs of expensive and preventable dental treatments.

We hope you will give this serious consideration as an important addition to Ontario’s Healthy Smiles Program.

Yours sincerely,

Carmen McGregor  
alPHa President

COPY: Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Roselle Martino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health and Long-Term Care, Population and Public Health Division  
Chairs, Ontario Boards of Health
TITLE: Fluoride Varnish Programs for Children at Risk for Dental Caries

SPONSOR: Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

WHEREAS In Ontario, 23% of Junior Kindergarten, 31% of Senior Kindergarten and 44% of Grade 2 children have at least one tooth that has experienced tooth decay (i.e. filled or decayed tooth);

WHEREAS Dental caries is a preventable disease and untreated tooth decay may lead to pain, infection, abscesses, tooth loss, chewing problems, poor nutritional status, poor self-esteem, and may negatively affect school performance, ability to learn, and growth and development; and

WHEREAS Dental surgery to treat severe tooth decay is the leading cause of day surgery among children five years and under. Approximately 19,000 of these operations are performed each year in Canada at a cost of $21.2 million. This cost is only a fraction of the true cost because it does not include the cost of dental treatment or travel; and

WHEREAS A Cochrane evidence-based review reported that the application of fluoride varnish is an effective intervention to reduce the risk of dental caries and reverse early carious lesions. This review found a 43% reduction in decayed, missing and filled tooth surfaces among permanent teeth and a 37% reduction among primary teeth; and

WHEREAS Biannual topical fluoride applications are recommended by the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention for the prevention of dental caries in children at risk. Primary care clinicians are also recommended to apply fluoride varnish to the primary teeth of all infants and children starting at the age of primary tooth eruption; and

WHEREAS The application of fluoride varnish is not a regulated act and does not require a lengthy course of training to learn application techniques and contraindications for use. Fluoride varnish is safe, easy to apply, well accepted by young children and can be provided by a variety of public health and primary care workers (e.g. oral health/dental staff, physicians, nurses, medical assistants); and

WHEREAS Fluoride varnish can be readily applied in different community outreach locations and does not require the use of dental equipment and special applicators; and

WHEREAS By reducing the risk and incidence of dental caries, Fluoride Varnish Programs (FVPs) reduce the costs of restorative dental treatment (i.e. dental fillings) and other costly dental treatments, such as root canal therapy, crown and bridge, and dentures; and

WHEREAS Ontario public health units conduct annual screening of elementary schools in order to classify schools as low, moderate or high screening intensity based on the percentage of Grade 2 children with two or more decayed teeth;
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) petition the Ontario Government to provide funding through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program for the implementation of school and community-based programs which use fluoride varnish to reduce the risk of tooth decay among children at risk for dental caries;

AND FURTHER that alPHa write to all boards of health in Ontario encouraging them to start a Fluoride Varnish Program for children at risk, if they have not already done so.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Resolution CARRIED