March 20, 2019

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen’s Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

Re: SUPPORT FOR PROVINCIAL ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR LOW-INCOME ADULTS AND SENIORS

The Board of Health of the Perth District Health Unit has received correspondence from several Public Health Units regarding support for a publicly-funded oral health program for low-income seniors, and encouraging the provincial government to expand access to this program to low-income adults.

The Board has reviewed correspondence received to date. At its regular meeting on February 20, 2019 the Board passed the following motion:

"That the Board send a letter of support regarding oral health program for low-income adults and seniors and copy Boards of Health and the provincial government."

The Perth District Health Unit has been exploring the challenges low-income adults and seniors face with accessing dental care, and the impact this has on their lives. Stories collected from Perth County residents in the fall of 2018 illustrate how dental problems worsen existing health conditions, affect people’s ability to eat, talk, and smile, and decrease their self-esteem, social connectedness, and employability.

When people have dental issues and cannot afford care, they often go to the ER or their physician. Ontario data show that every nine minutes someone goes to a hospital Emergency Room and every three minutes someone visits a doctor’s office due to dental problems. This is an unnecessary burden on our health care system that costs at least $38 million annually – with no treatment of the underlying dental problem. In 2015, there were 18,747 physician visits in the Southwest LHIN and over 500 visits to Perth County’s three hospitals for dental problems.

Adults and seniors living with low income in Ontario would benefit greatly from access to dental preventive and treatment services. A provincial oral health program for seniors is a welcome addition to existing publicly-funded dental programs.

Sincerely,

Kathy Vassilakos, Chair
Board of Health

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c. Ontario Boards of Health