March 5th, 2019

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen’s Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
premier@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford

Re: Support for Provincial Oral Health Program for Low-Income adults and seniors

On behalf of our board of health, I am writing you to express our support for Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Units request to the Government of Ontario to build a provincial dental program for low-income seniors. The financial, health and social impacts of poor oral health in seniors and adults has been a priority for our health unit and Board.

The 2016 Community Needs Assessment for Windsor-Essex (Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 2016) identified the dental health of adults in Windsor-Essex as a concern, and the second most reported service need for our residents. At the November 2016 meeting, our Board passed a resolution endorsing the importance of oral health as part of overall health and recommending the Province of Ontario expand publically funded oral health programs to include low income and vulnerable adults and seniors.

In November of 2018, the Windsor-Essex Health Unit released the results, Dental Health of Adults and Seniors in Windsor-Essex Survey Results (2018). This report examined the experiences of adults and seniors with the oral health system in Windsor-Essex and identified a significant barrier in accessing routine and emergency services. In particular, lack of insurance and financial security were the top barriers for improving oral health of respondents. Our community has some community supports including a low-cost/no-cost dental program for adults through the Downtown Mission of Windsor and St. Clair College, however these services have hundreds on their waiting list are scarcely enough to address the growing need in Windsor-Essex, leaving many residents with no option other than avoiding care or visiting the emergency room.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has pledged to implement a publicly funded dental care program for low-income seniors. Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) has increased our services through our healthy smiles program year over year since 2010. We see first hand the benefit these programs have for children and their families and often receive calls and requests for adults needing further support. The WECHU supports expanded publicly funded dental care programs to include low-income seniors and would like to encourage the government to consider including all low-income adults. We look forward to receiving further news related to public health’s role in reducing barriers to oral health and welcome the opportunity to increase our service delivery to the most vulnerable in our community.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit thanks you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Gary McNamara
Chair, Board of Health

Theresa Marentette
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Honorable Christine Elliot, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Deputy Premier
    Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
    Local MPPs
    Local Municipal Councils
    Essex-County Dental Society
    Ontario Dental Association
    Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)
    Ontario Boards of Health
    Windsor-Essex Board of Health

References


