

Guest Remarks
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President



CANADIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION DENTAIRE CANADIENNE

Canada Dental Benefit Announcement

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Thank you, Prime Minister, for inviting the Canadian Dental Association to participate in this important and historic announcement. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to be here today with you to launch the Canada Dental Benefit.

At CDA, we know that oral health is an essential component of overall health, and we believe that Canadians have a right to good oral health. That is why we fully support this initiative by the federal government to improve the oral health of Canadian children, and to enhance their access to dental care. Poor oral health strains other parts of the healthcare system, such as through emergency hospital visits, or managing the long-term impacts of poor oral health on systemic disease.

This is particularly the case with children. Unfortunately, despite progress over past decades, tooth decay remains the most common, yet preventable, childhood chronic disease in Canada. It is the most common reason for Canadian children to undergo day surgery and it is a leading cause of why children miss school. Having been in private practice for over 35 years, I can tell you that nothing is more heart wrenching than to see a child suffer with severe dental decay.

This often requires treatment under general anaesthesia in a surgical facility, which may involve lengthy wait times. In addition to the impact on the child's health, the experience can lead to long term dental fear and anxiety. Therefore, it is so important to ensure that Canadian parents can access dental care for their children. Early detection of susceptibility to dental decay and exposure to good oral hygiene habits and preventive care can make a lifetime of difference for a person's mouth and health.

While Canada compares favourably to many other countries, too many people - including children - still do not receive the dental care they need. More than six million Canadians each year avoid visiting the dentist because of the cost; particularly those in low-income families. While every province and territory in Canada has some sort of publicly funded dental program for children, these vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, leaving significant gaps.

That is why CDA welcomes the government's phased in approach to this initiative, starting with the Canada Dental Benefit. This will allow time to consult and to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders on a long-term solution that is well-informed, targeted, comprehensive, and effective. This includes continuing to work with provincial and territorial governments on the interactions between federal proposals and existing dental programming. As well as engaging directly with dentists across Canada on the design of future federal dental care proposals. We also want to thank this government for deferring to patients, parents, and providers on determining what dental treatment is necessary. This will ensure that children get the dental care they need, without restrictions or delays.

While \$650, or \$1300 over two years, may not be enough for every single child, it should still be enough for the vast majority to obtain the care they need. We hope, with the

Canada Dental Benefit in place, that the oral health of Canadian children will improve, as will their overall health and wellbeing.

And while the hard work is only just beginning, let's celebrate today that thanks to this initiative, parents across Canada will now have support to make sure their young children begin a lifetime of good oral health!

Thank you Prime Minister and Congratulations!