

Enhanced Safety for Workplaces



Capital Cost Allowances and Grants to Offset Expenses to Enhance Workplace Safety and Patient Care Areas

Dental offices were required to adapt to new or interim regulatory regimes in the wake of COVID-19. For many offices, this required making physical changes to their offices to ensure that they could provide enhanced levels of protection to their patients and their staff, including creating separation between patients, retrofitting dental operatories or addressing airflow within in the office, among other issues.

An ability to recapture some of these costs through capital cost allowance would help to address and alleviate some short-term challenges that frontline health care professionals face in ensuring Canadians' health and well-being throughout the pandemic. These should be retroactive to the start of 2020, or at least March 1, 2020. As the response to the current crisis continues to evolve, and as a protective measure for future public health emergencies, a grant for new enhancements to health care providers' offices would help them to adapt their physical spaces. These grants could also act as continued economic stimulus to the broader economy.

RECOMMENDATION:

The CDA recommends that the Federal Government provide capital cost allowances to help defray the capital expenses involved in enhancing the safety of workspaces and patient care areas in health care offices, as well as grants to encourage offices to continue enhancing these areas.

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) is the national voice for dentistry dedicated to the promotion of optimal oral health, an essential component of general health, and to the advancement and leadership of a unified profession.

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Extended Health Care Benefits for Canadian Businesses

The need for extended health care services has never been greater than in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. At a time of uncertainty, the stability of extended health care benefits, often provided by employers, is essential to ensure the ongoing health and well-being of Canadians.

The Federal Government's Role

The Federal Government should work with stakeholders to look for ways to incentivize employers or plan sponsors to maintain or enhance extended health care benefits, and to offer similar incentives to Canadians who may choose to sponsor their own benefits. This would help Canadians access needed dental, psychological, vision, chiropractic and physiotherapy services after we're all coming through a period of severe stress.

RECOMMENDATION:

The CDA recommends that the Federal Government support Canadian businesses in providing extended health care benefits.



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Access to Quality Oral Health Care for All Canadians

Canada has one of the best oral health care delivery systems in the world with care primarily delivered through privately-owned and publicly regulated dental clinics. Targeted funding is required to address gaps in access to quality oral health care.

Statistics Canada's 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) indicated that:

- as many Canadians visited dental professionals (74%) as they did medical doctors (74%) in a one-year period.
- for Canadians aged 12 and over, 67% consulted a dental professional in 2014 and 75% did so in 2018. This increase represents more than 4 million people.
- The proportion of Canadians age 65 and over who have consulted a dental professional annually has increased, from 55% to 68% in four years.



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Access to Quality Oral Health Care for All Canadians

Unfortunately, not all Canadians enjoy this excellent access to oral health care services. More Canadians from marginalized communities are experiencing challenges in accessing quality oral health care.

Solutions to improve access to oral health care must address many complex issues. No single organization, including the Federal Government, can be expected to address the oral health care access disparities of certain vulnerable groups of Canadians on its own.

There is a need to fund targeted provincial and territorial oral health care programs that help to address the needs of specific groups.

Provincial and Territorial Oral Health Programs

Most publicly funded oral health programs fall under provincial or territorial jurisdiction.

Growth in usage of publicly funded oral health programs is particularly acute among low-income seniors, children, and individuals with mobility, developmental, physical, and mental health challenges.

Across the country and over the past decade, the erosion of these programs has created a situation where the needs of these vulnerable groups are no longer being adequately met.

The Federal Government's Role

Within the context of the Canadian Health Care Transfer, CDA believes that a specific funding envelope to the provinces and territories should specifically target critical oral health care programs.

This will help to address programs that have seen erosion in funding levels and help to renew the programs that have been cancelled because of provincial and territorial budget constraints.

RECOMMENDATION:

The CDA recommends a long-term approach to funding public oral health programs provided at the provincial and territorial level through a dedicated funding envelope of \$3 Billion in the Canada Health Transfer



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Indigenous Children's Oral Health

First Nations and Inuit children experience much higher rates of dental disease than most Canadians.

- Cavity rates in First Nations and Inuit children are 4-5x higher than the national average and continue to climb.
- Day surgery for cavities in children is 8x higher in populations with a high percentage of First Nations and Inuit children.
- Rates of periodontal (gum) diseases are also high among First Nations and Inuit children.

Poor oral health isn't just about smiles. It negatively impacts quality of life in many areas:

- Self-esteem
- Employment opportunities
- The ability to eat nutritious foods
- Good overall health

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Indigenous Children's Oral Health

Contributing factors are complex and multifaceted, and part of a broader discussion of reconciliation and health transformation.

Clean Water for Oral Health

There can be no improvement to oral health outcomes without clean water in Indigenous communities.

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) recognizes the work that has been done to remove boil water advisories in Indigenous communities. It is vital that this work continues on an urgent basis. Areas of focus should be on long-term and sustainable water infrastructure solutions that are community-based and ensuring that access to clean drinking water is the norm.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The CDA recommends Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to continue to address poor drinking water conditions in First Nations and Inuit communities.
- The CDA recommends that ISC also undertake long-term solutions to ensure clean water in these communities, in perpetuity.



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Support for Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is mandatory for the provision of oral health care. Dentists and the entire dental team are health care workers on the front lines providing the Canadian public with urgent, emergent and routine oral health care each day, helping to keep patients out of hospitals and emergency rooms. Dental practices depend on the ability to purchase reliable, cost-effective, medical-grade PPE items including N95 respirators, level 3 surgical masks, gloves, and gowns, to continue providing Canadians with the oral health care they require.

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) recognizes the complex challenges related to the limited supply of reasonably priced PPE items, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ongoing and unprecedented demand for these PPE materials is also exacerbated by supply chain issues.

Dentistry has been confronted with PPE supply challenges since the onset of the pandemic, which has resulted in interruptions for some dental offices and restricting oral health care provision for some Canadians. Ensuring that dentists and the entire dental team have access to necessary PPE will ensure that Canadians continue to receive the essential oral health care services from local dental offices without causing any additional burden to Canada's health care system.

Role of the Federal Government

Dental offices acquire the same kinds of PPE as large government health care facilities. These governmental organizations, including the Government of Canada, can leverage their purchasing power to acquire mass quantities (or impose guidelines on suppliers that have them) and prioritize delivery of supplies to those entities actively on the front lines of health care delivery, including dentists.

RECOMMENDATION:

The CDA recommends that the Federal Government, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, work with the provincial chief medical officers and their respective dental directors to actively ensure that dentists have continued access to a stable, ongoing supply of reasonably priced PPE, including medical grade masks, N95 respirators and gloves. This assistance should remain dynamic and adjust to the state of PPE availability, as it evolves in the coming years.



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