

**Checklist and Overview:**  
***A Proposed Framework for the Canadian Dental Care Plan***

*Dentists know what makes a good dental care program*

Dentists across the country share a common goal: to promote optimal dental health for all Canadians. The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) is an historic opportunity to give Canadians great access to dental care. If done right, the CDCP could go down in history as one of Canada's greatest achievements in public health.

As the experts in oral health – and the healthcare providers who deliver dental care – we know what a good dental program should look like, and we want to help the federal government make the CDCP a success.

That is why dental associations across Canada joined forces to develop *A Proposed Framework for the Canadian Dental Care Plan*. This comprehensive blueprint for a strong dental care program is based on data, research, and input from dental experts.

In a nutshell, a successful CDCP should:

**☑ Co-exist with already established insurance plans.**

Two-thirds of Canadians already enjoy world-class dental care. But too many Canadians still must make difficult choices between their dental health and other important expenses. The CDCP is meant to help the latter group - providing dental care for those who don't have insurance through their work, school or other group coverage.

If employers start cutting or ending dental care benefits for their employees, it puts the whole program, and your oral health – at risk:

- The number of people who would be forced onto the CDCP would grow dramatically, the cost to taxpayers will skyrocket and the amount available for each person would shrink.
- People who won't qualify for the CDCP because of their combined family income could be left with no benefits at all.

The government needs to make sure businesses have the incentive to continue to offer dental care coverage to their employees, so that the CDCP can help the existing one-third of Canadians who don't have dental insurance.

**☑ Be easy to access and to use.**

Patients receiving care under the CDCP should be able to get the dental care they need, when they need it – in the same way people with workplace benefits do – with easy enrollment or registration, quick claims submission and payment, minimal paperwork and with patients making decisions about their own care, in partnership with their dentist. Most dental offices are already connected with electronic systems to submit claims and payments between patients, dentists, and insurance companies. **Most people do not have**

**to fill out forms and wait for the government to approve their care before they can receive it.** Why reinvent the wheel and take the decisions out of the hands of patients and their healthcare providers?

**☑ Cover all patient needs.**

All dental patients get an initial exam and assessment. Dentists are able to diagnose all issues, including caries as well as periodontal disease and infection as well as orthodontic requirements. Treatment plans sometimes can require a crown or a root canal. The CDCP should provide coverage for all treatment needs. Too often, dentists see the government plans are restricted to extraction and do not cover the cost of prevention, such as regular hygiene appointments. The CDCP should provide a full range of treatment options that address the patient's needs. Oral health is an essential part of your overall health. A healthy smile is important to a person's self-esteem and can significantly affect their mental health as well as their employment opportunities.

**☑ Fully cover all treatment costs.**

The CDCP is being advertised as a plan that would require patients whose family income is \$90,000 or less to be subject to a 20% copay fee. Those patients whose family income is less than \$70,000 would have no out of pocket expenses.

Provincial and territorial dental associations provide suggested fee guides developed by third-party experts. These guides help dentists independently set fees for their practices that are fair, transparent, and predictable to dentists, insurers, and patients. The CDCP must respect the provincial fee guides in order to encourage providers to participate in the plan.

**☑ Assist dental clinics with their current labour shortages.**

Dental clinics are currently struggling to keep pace with demand. Many clinics cannot take on new patients at this time due to a shortage of dental assistants, dental hygienists, and dentists. Currently, 40% of New Brunswick dentists are over age 50. Our dentist to population ratio is 2<sup>nd</sup> worst in Canada. New Brunswick only has one pediatric dentist with a long waiting list of children who need treatment. The CDCP can generate a big influx of new patients with complex needs. We need staffing and at times more access to OR resources to accommodate this increase in demand for services.

If the federal government can't deliver a strong CDCP by the end of the year, we recommend at least a temporary expansion of an initiative that is working for Canadians –the Canada Dental Benefit. This is a fixed dollar amount that a patient can use to be reimbursed for dental-related expenses. Nearly nine out of 10 Canadians support the Canada Dental Benefit, and public surveys suggest that most Canadians would support an oral health spending account as a permanent solution.

We want to champion a CDCP that will respect patients, providers, and taxpayers.