

OHIP pays to treat and care for every part of the body except for our teeth and gums. Two to three million Ontarians have not seen a dentist in the past year mainly due to the cost (CDHO, 2014). Most children 17 and under from low income families can access dental care through the Province's Healthy Smiles Ontario program, but there is no similar provincial program for low income adults and seniors. As a result, 61,000 Ontarians visited an Emergency Room (ER) for dental related issues in 2015, costing taxpayers at least \$31 million annually for a prescription to painkillers or antibiotics, but with no treatment of the problem. Locally, a total of 551 dental related visits were made to the Ross Memorial Hospital ER in 2015 costing nearly \$282,663 for no dental treatment (Ministry of Health and Long Term Care IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO).

We hope that Council will support the Ontario Oral Health Alliance's Dental Health Resolution by endorsing the importance of oral health and calling on the provincial government to expand public oral health programs with prime consideration for low income adults and seniors; and send copies of the resolution to the Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Local Members of Provincial Parliament, Member Municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

DENTAL HEALTH RESOLUTION

Resolution Regarding the Expansion of Provincial Publicly Funded Dental Health Programs for Adults with Low Incomes

Presented to the City of Kawartha Lakes Council

By Anna Rusak, member of the Ontario Oral Health Alliance – Haliburton, Kawartha, Brock Chapter

WHEREAS in Canadian public policy the care of our lips, tongues and throats is fully covered by public funding, but not our teeth and gums; and

WHEREAS oral health is essential to maintaining overall health; and

WHEREAS a mounting body of evidence shows a link between poor oral health and diabetes, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and Alzheimer's disease; and

WHEREAS untreated tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss results in social and psychological suffering and interferes with employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS between 2 to 3 million Ontarians have not seen a dentist in the past year mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

WHEREAS approximately every 9 minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers or antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

WHEREAS almost a third of Canadians have neither public nor private insurance to help them pay for the care of their teeth and gums; and

WHEREAS access to oral health care should not be limited to people with private health insurance or who can afford to pay out of pocket; and

WHEREAS Ontario's reform of the health care system should include oral health care so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental services they need to be healthy; and

WHEREAS Ontario only has public dental programs for low income children, and no public programs for low income adults and seniors; and

WHEREAS local Ontario Works (OW) recipients are eligible for limited discretionary coverage for emergency treatment only and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients are eligible for basic dental care and limited discretionary coverage for dentures;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES COUNCIL:

Strongly endorse the importance of oral health and requests that the Premier of Ontario include oral health as part of the government's primary care transformation initiatives, and further

That Council calls on the provincial government to expand public oral health programs with prime consideration for low income adults and seniors, and further

That Council forwards copies of this resolution to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Local Members of Provincial Parliament, Member Municipalities, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

References:

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Canadian Health Measures Survey. (2007-2009). Statistics Canada

King, Arlene. (2012) Oral Health –More Than Just Cavities. A Report by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Goel, Vivek et al. (2012) Staying Ahead of the Curve: A Unified Public Health Program for Ontario

Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. (2014) *Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable People Living in Canada.* <http://cahs-acss.ca/improving-access-to-oral-health-care-for-vulnerable-people-living-in-canada/>

College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (2014), *Review of Oral Health Services in Ontario* [http://www.cdho.org/docs/default-source/pdfs/oral-health-rpt/review-of-oral-health-services-in-ontario-\(full-report\).pdf?sfvrsn=6](http://www.cdho.org/docs/default-source/pdfs/oral-health-rpt/review-of-oral-health-services-in-ontario-(full-report).pdf?sfvrsn=6)

National Ambulatory Care Reporting System IntelliHealth Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2015