

November 4, 2024

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Room 281
Queens Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health / Deputy Premier
777 Bay Street, College Park, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister
College Park, 5th Flr, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Jones, and Dr. Moore:

RE: Recommendation for Provincial Oral Health Strategy, Including Evaluation of Current Funding Model.

On behalf of the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit), please accept this correspondence recommending the development of a provincial oral health strategy that includes a remuneration model for dentists designed to promote equitable access to basic preventive and treatment services (whether delivered privately or in concert with public organizations); and an evaluation of the current funding model for oral health services to inform the aforementioned provincial oral health strategy.

Individuals who receive dental care are less likely to have chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease and good oral health is an essential component of overall health status. Equity-seeking populations tend to have complex dental, social and logistical needs, requiring more intensive clinical and administrative resources. Access to publicly funded dental care varies by jurisdiction, whereby access is positively related to the number of providers accepting individuals with these benefits. It is increasingly common within the Nipissing and Parry Sound districts to have no dental providers accepting clients in receipt of publicly funded dental benefits. One reason for this is the provincial reimbursement model for publicly funded dental programs. A 2019 report from the Canadian Centre for Health Economics indicates that the benefits schedule provided by Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) represents 30 cents on the dollar for a dental practice. For Ontario Works (OW), dental benefits are noted as a 'discretionary health benefit', that is administered at the municipal level by OW administrators. Both ODSP and OW dental reimbursement fees are generally lower than the suggested fees from the Ontario Dental Association. This discrepancy in reimbursement between public and private insurance providers creates a compounded inequity for individuals and families attempting to access basic preventive and treatment services.

Our Health Unit provides the publicly funded Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) and the Ontario Seniors Dental Care

Programs (OSDCP), as well as a Low-income Adult Dental Program (based on local need). These programs are busy with high demand; however, we struggle to recruit and retain dentists as the compensation packages offered in local public health are not competitive with those of private practice. Our district does not have other publicly funded or subsidized dental clinics: we are often the only option. The reimbursement model for publicly funded dental services coupled with the disparity in dentist compensation between public and private sectors, creates a structural inequity for all individuals in receipt of publicly funded dental benefits.

At its meeting on September 25, 2025, the Board of Health carried the following resolution #BOH/2024/09/04:

***Whereas**, due to the higher earnings potential in private practice, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit) faces difficulties in recruiting dentists, as the compensation packages offered in public health are less competitive than those in private practice; and*

***Whereas**, the demand for basic dental services in the district is very high. Despite its relatively small size, the Health Unit offers one of the larger Oral Health programs among health units in Ontario. This includes the highly-utilized Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (provincially mandated) and provision of a Low-Income Adult Dental Program (not mandated but based on local need) contributing to the large size of the Oral Health Program in addition to the Healthy Smiles Ontario program (mandated for low-income children and youth); and*

***Whereas**, it is not yet known how or if the Federal dental program will impact the need and level of service in local communities; and*

***Whereas**, equity-seeking populations tend to have complex dental, social and logistical needs, which require more intensive clinical and administrative resources. These challenges drive up the cost of oral care provision, dissuading private practitioners from accepting equity-seeking clients; and*

***Whereas**, there is no central coordination of dental services across the province to ensure that the oral health workforce matches need, and that remuneration models and rates encourage equitable access to basic care across Ontario; and*

***Therefore, Be It Resolved**, that the North Bay Parry Sound District Board of Health (Board of Health) recommends that the Ministry of Health develop a provincial oral health strategy that includes a remuneration model for dentists designed to promote equitable access to basic preventive and treatment dental services throughout the province (whether delivered privately or in concert with public organizations); and*

***Furthermore, Be It Resolved**, that the Board of Health recommends that the Ministry of Health undertake an evaluation of the current funding model for Oral Health services to inform the above-recommended provincial oral health strategy; and,*

Furthermore, Be It Resolved**, that the Board of Health provide correspondence of these resolutions to the Honourable Doug Ford (Premier), the Honourable Sylvia Jones (Ontario Minister of Health), Dr. Kieran Moore (Chief Medical Officer of Health), Victor Fedeli, MPP (Nipissing), Graydon Smith, MPP (Parry Sound-Muskoka), John Vanthof, MPP (Timiskaming-Cochrane), Michael Sherar (President and CEO of Public Health Ontario), Ontario Boards of Health and **the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA), Association of Municipalities of

Ontario, The District of Parry Sound Municipal Association, and member municipalities.

Sincerely,



Rick Champagne (Nov 7, 2024 13:42 EST)

Rick Champagne
Chairperson, Board of Health



Dr. Zimbalatti (Nov 4, 2024 11:05 EST)

Carol Zimbalatti, M.D., CCFP, MPH
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

/al

Copy to:

Vic Fedeli, MPP, Nipissing
Graydon Smith, MPP, Muskoka-Parry Sound
John Vanthof, MPP, Timiskaming-Cochrane
Michael Sherar (President and CEO of Public Health Ontario)
Boards of Health of Ontario
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
The District of Parry Sound Municipal Association
Health Unit Member Municipalities