

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2012 September 13

ONTARIO'S CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH ORAL HEALTH REPORT

Recommendations

It is recommended:

- 1) *That the Board of Health endorse the Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Report entitled, Oral Health – More Than Just Cavities; and further*
- 2) *That the Board of Health send a letter to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care encouraging action on the four recommendations listed in the Chief Medical Officer of Health Report entitled, Oral Health – More Than Just Cavities.*

Overview of the Chief Medical Officer of Health Report

On April 27, 2012, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Arlene King, released a report entitled, Oral Health – More Than Just Cavities attached as [Appendix A](#).

The Report was written to raise awareness of the importance of oral health and equitable access to oral health services. Many Ontarians are not aware of the connection between oral health and overall health and do not have access to affordable dental care. The purpose of the Report was to:

- 1) Bring more attention to the importance of dental health;
- 2) Prompt a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of publicly-funded programs within the current fiscal framework; and
- 3) Improve access to oral health services for Ontarians, particularly low-income families and children, seniors and First Nations communities.

The Report reviews the current state of oral health care in Canada. It emphasizes the importance of prevention with respect to oral health and highlights the economic arguments supporting oral health care and drinking water fluoridation. As well, the Report provides an overview of oral health in Ontario, the Ontario Public Health Standards, and the publicly-funded dental programs in Ontario. Finally, the Report outlines oral health inequities that are present in Ontario.

Recommendations of the Report


Dr. King has made four recommendations for action and review by an expert advisory panel. They are as follows:

- 1) Conduct a review of current policies and mechanisms to ensure that all Ontarians have access to optimally fluoridated drinking water.
- 2) Conduct a review of how publicly funded oral health programs and services for Ontarians are monitored and evaluated. The review should include the quality, availability and appropriateness of current data and identification of missing data in order to improve programs and services.
- 3) Explore opportunities for better integration and/or alignment of low-income oral health services in Ontario, including integration and/or alignment with the rest of the health care system. This relates predominantly to the client journey, including making it easier for the client to access the care that is needed, when it is needed.
- 4) Explore opportunities to improve access to oral health services as well as awareness of oral health services available to First Nations people in Ontario, with a focus on better integration and/or alignment of the variety of available dental programs.

Conclusion

The Report entitled, Oral Health – More Than Just Cavities, by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, outlines an action plan to improve oral health for Ontarians. It is recommended that the Board of Health endorse Dr. King's report and write a letter to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care encouraging action on Dr. King's four recommendations.

This report was prepared by Dr. Maria van Harten, Dental Consultant; and Dr. Bryna Warshawsky, Associate Medical Officer of Health and Director, Oral Health, Communicable Disease & Sexual Health Services; and Mr. Paul Sharma, former Manager, Oral Health Team.



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This report addresses the Child Health Standard of the Ontario Public Health Standards
