



Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

8/5/06

Ms. Linda Stewart
Executive Director
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
502-425 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1T6

RECEIVED

MAY 12 2006

ALPHA

Dear Ms. Stewart:

Thank you for your correspondence of February 14, 2006, regarding your resolution to develop a national oral health strategy.

In recognition of the important link between oral and general health, and the need to improve the Government of Canada's capacity to address oral health issues, Health Canada has established the Office of the Chief Dental Officer (OCDO), whose goals are:

1. to provide evidence-based oral health perspectives on a wide range of health policy and program development issues;
2. to provide expert oral health advice, consultation and information;
3. to integrate oral health promotion with general health and wellness initiatives;
4. to assist in gathering epidemiological information for program planning on federal/provincial/community levels and establish priorities for research;
5. to develop integrated collaborative approaches to preventing and controlling oral and associated diseases; and
6. to provide contact to liaise with professional associations, provinces, academic institutions, and other nongovernmental associations (NGOs) on oral health issues.

The OCDO will provide a framework and mechanism to promote, manage, and maintain the oral health of all Canadians and, to this end, the Federal Provincial Territorial Dental Directors (FPTDD) has been established to fulfill this goal. Through the FPTDD and other stakeholders, the OCDO will facilitate discussions on a variety of

.../2

topics, such as a national oral health strategy, access to care and services for all Canadians, and the promotion to integrate oral health with general health.

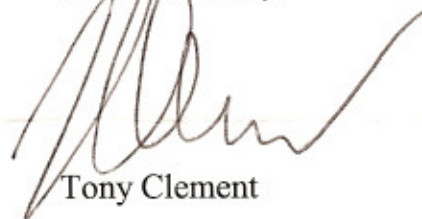
The integration of oral health and general health may be the greatest challenge facing Health Canada and the OCDO. Oral health care is often neglected by the Canadian health care system, despite its significant implications on general health. Until recently, oral health was not considered a health matter, even though recent research shows potential links to several systemic disorders. One of the primary objectives of the OCDO will be to raise awareness of the connection between oral and general health.

In terms of coverage for dental health care, you may be aware that, under the *Canada Health Act*, the provincial and territorial health insurance plans must insure medically necessary hospital and physician services, and medically or dentally required surgical-dental procedures performed by a dentist in a hospital, where a hospital is required for the proper performance of the procedure. All other dental care is outside the scope of the Act, and considered to be an additional benefit provided at the discretion of the provincial or territorial governments.

In view of the provincial jurisdiction in this matter, you took appropriate action by providing copies of your correspondence to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care of Ontario.

I appreciate having this opportunity to respond to your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tony Clement', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Tony Clement