

November 20, 2013

The Honourable Deb Matthews  
Minister – Minister's Office  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
Hepburn Block, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
80 Grosvenor St  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews:

**Re: Oral Health Care for Low Income People**

Despite provincially mandated public health programs, many people of low income have no affordable access to dental care. The Board of Health is concerned that funding for oral health care announced as part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008 was reduced from the original \$45 million to \$34 million by 2011/2012. Therefore, the Board urges the Ontario government to fully utilize all the funds annually as originally allocated to oral health services for low income individuals and families in 2008.

While the Healthy Smiles Ontario program has provided relief for those living in poverty who receive it, the current income eligibility cutoff is very low, resulting in the program being underutilized provincially and in the exclusion of many who need the program. To address this, the Board recommends changing the entry level criteria for Healthy Smiles Ontario from \$20,000 net family income or less, to be for any family that receives the Ontario Child Tax Benefit. This is in keeping with the Association of Local Public Health Agencies Resolution A13-2 entitled "The Healthy Smiles Ontario and the Overall Inequality within the Oral Health Care System" (Appended). The Board also recommends that the province take action on all of the recommendations within the resolution.

Oral health is essential for general health and well-being, and access to dental care that provides even the most basic dental care is especially important for low income individuals and families. People living in poverty bear a disproportionate amount of oral health problems compared to the rest of the population. Local public health dental services are essential to meeting these needs.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY**

Barry Ward  
Chair, Board of Health

Att. (1)

c Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario  
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Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Public Health Association  
Local Members of Parliament in Simcoe Muskoka  
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