




## ONTARIO ELECTION 2018 NEEDED: A PUBLIC DENTAL PROGRAM FOR LOW INCOME ADULTS AND SENIORS

### THE PROBLEM

- Too many people across Ontario experience pain and suffering because they can't afford basic dental care.
- You can't work, maintain a job or look for a job when you're in dental pain or missing front teeth.
- Many adults and seniors on fixed incomes can't afford dental care or getting dentures.
- Ontario Oral Health Alliance (OOHA) members get calls and emails every week from desperate people in pain, but are not able to help them.
- There's a public dental program for low income children, and a patchwork of inadequate programs for adults on social assistance, but no public oral health program for adults and seniors who can't afford to pay out of pocket for dental care.
- Many private dentists won't accept people on social assistance. Research shows people living on low incomes prefer to go to public dental clinics in Community Health Centres and Public Health Units where they are welcomed and can access other health and social services.

### THE COSTS TO OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

- In Ontario, 1 in 5 people do not visit a dentist due to the cost.
- Many people turn in desperation to doctors' offices and hospital emergency rooms (ER) – but they can only get antibiotics and painkillers, not treatment.
- The current opioid crisis impacts the choices that doctors have to deal with dental pain – many are reluctant to prescribe opioid painkillers

 In Ontario, every 9 minutes someone goes to a hospital Emergency Room (ER), and every 3 minutes someone goes to a doctor's office due to dental problems. This costs our healthcare system at least \$38 million/year – with no treatment provided. We need an effective public solution to this healthcare problem.

### THE ONTARIO ORAL HEALTH ALLIANCE'S PROPOSAL

- It's not fair that only people who can afford private dental care can have healthy mouths and teeth.
- OOHA believes there should be equitable access to oral health care for everyone living in Ontario.
- The next Ontario government should extend public dental programs for children to include low income adults and seniors.
- Roll over current funding for social assistance dental benefits into the new program, so people on social assistance are included. Cover prevention, treatment and emergency dental services, as well as dentures.
- Phase in the program to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our communities who are living on low incomes and have no dental insurance.
- Provide operating funding to support a mixed model of public and private dental care delivery.
- Make full use of existing public dental clinics in Community Health Centres, Public Health Units and any other community organizations with funding that allows them to treat low income adults and seniors, as well as children.
- Ensure accessibility for low income people with capital funding to add dental suites in Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres and Public Health Units which don't have them.
- Invest in public dental buses and innovative uses of technology so that people living in long term care homes, rural and remote communities have equitable access to oral health care.

**ELECTION 2018: ASK CANDIDATES: 1 in 5 in Ontario can't afford private dental care. Many end up in the ER. There are no public dental programs for adults who can't afford private dentists. What steps would your party take to address this oral healthcare problem?**