



THE CANADIAN DENTAL  
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

For immediate release (Disponible en français sur la demande)

## Media Release

### **Canadian Dental Hygienists Support Improved Health Services to Remote First Nations Communities**

April 30, 2015 (Ottawa, ON) — The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) is pleased to see that the *2015 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada* focus on the critical issue of access to health services and medical transportation for remote First Nations communities. This matter is close to the heart of dental hygienists, who have been working for some time with all levels of government and key stakeholders to raise awareness of the oral health care needs of Canada's rural and remote populations.

Research has indicated that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples experience unacceptably high rates of oral disease, often requiring treatment that is not available in their communities. As CDHA President Mandy Hayre notes, "Rates for dental day surgery are close to nine times higher for children from neighbourhoods with high versus low Aboriginal populations." The cost of medical transportation and hospital care for these children and their families is considerable: \$21.2 million per year. Hayre adds, "Most oral diseases can be prevented through upstream (preventive) approaches to care. Dental hygienists are uniquely positioned to deliver these preventive and therapeutic services, ensuring that all Canadians have equitable access to appropriate health care professionals and the highest quality care in the right setting, at the right time, based on their personal needs."

CDHA calls on the government to re-allocate funding from after-the-fact oral disease treatments to preventive oral care and education initiatives. This shift will ultimately decrease hospital and treatment costs and contribute to fiscal restraint, while improving the oral health of Canadians. CDHA also urges the government to recognize dental hygienists as service providers through its federal health care programs, and review and amend outdated legislation related to scope of practice in order to optimize

oral health services for the populations that it serves and, most importantly, reduce oral health disparities experienced by remote First Nations communities.

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 26,800 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 17,000 individual members including dental hygienists and students. Dental hygiene is the 6th largest registered health profession in Canada, with professionals working in a variety of settings, including independent practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca)

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