

Honourable Moira Stilwell, M.D.
Po Box 9058 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E1

10th January 2013

Dear Minister Stilwell:

Re: Equitable Dental Access

As members of the B.C. Association of Social Workers (BCASW) Health Practice Committee, we are concerned with the growing inequities in oral health provision in our province. We are hearing with increased frequency that First Nations peoples, individuals living with (dis)Ability and individuals on income assistance are having challenges accessing dental care.

While multifaceted, it is our understanding that this is rooted in discrepancies between the recommended B.C. Dental Association (BCDA) private fee guide and governmental rates, and in the arduous processes involved in securing governmental authorization and payment.

The BCDA estimates that Ministry rates are approximately 60% of current dental fees. This results in Ministry clients having to find money to cover the extra cost and causes some dentists to limit the services they provide to Ministry clients in order to minimize the economic impact on their practice.

As you know, access to health care, including dental care, is a determinant of good health. Preventative dental care reduces the cost of more expensive health care associated with poor dental health. Furthermore, preventative dental care reduces the need for more complex and costly work in the future.

The Ministry can improve dental care to disadvantaged groups by:

- Minimizing the disparity between the BCDA private fee guide and the Ministry dental schedule.
- Streamlining the authorization and billing processes for government funded dental care.
- Providing a financial subsidy to the not-for-profit dental clinics in the province.




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These relatively inexpensive measures could have a substantial impact on the health of vulnerable populations in British Columbia. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Fiona Lewis MSW RSW
Chair, BCASW Health Advocacy Committee



Dianne Heath MSW RSW
Executive Director, BCASW

cc Jocelyn Johnston, BC Dental Association
Carole James, MLA