

Focus

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- Saving for your child's education

odha

WE DID IT!

It's official.

Dental hygienists are now able to self-initiate subject to approval by the CDHO.

ODHA is pleased to announce that on September 1 the government put into force (proclaimed) the amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act* contained in Bill 171.

Dental hygienists have achieved independence after a 14-year campaign to

remove the restrictions that tie dental hygiene to dentistry.

The McGuinty government fulfilled its 2003 election promise to improve access to preventive oral care services by allowing dental hygienists the freedom to clean teeth without a procedural "order" from a dentist subject to regulatory college regulations and standards of practice.

"This is an exciting and momentous achievement for dental hygiene," said ODHA President Melanie Doyle. "It represents a major milestone in the profession's history and in the way healthcare is delivered to the people of Ontario."

The public can choose their healthcare provider and obtain affordable, professional oral care treatment when and where they need it. Those who will benefit most are individuals who can't afford to take care of their teeth and gums or have difficulty obtaining preventive oral care services. •

See story on page 5 and procedures required in order to self-initiate.

Special recognition and thanks to all those who supported the ODHA and worked so hard and long to help push this issue forward.

See President's column page 3.



An historic occasion: George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, presents an official copy of Bill 171 that contains amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act* to, from left to right: CDHO Registrar

Fran Richardson and President Cathie Mazal-Kuula, and ODHA Immediate Past President Penny White and Executive Director Margaret Carter. The amendments to the Act were proclaimed on Sept. 1.

Ontario Dental Hygiene Week – October 21-27

Congratulations – and thank you!

It is a great honour to be your President at such a monumental time in our profession. I am truly delighted to be able to announce to the membership that the amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act* were passed and proclaimed into law.

This is a very exciting time for dental hygiene and the public. It's an historic occasion and a turning point for our profession. We accomplished our objective – the public can choose their healthcare provider and obtain access to affordable dental hygiene services.

There is no doubt that the ODHA spent a lot of time, effort and money to achieve this positive outcome. During the past 14 years, amending the Act has dominated our profession and involved countless individuals. Along the way we met and overcame a number of obstacles. It's been quite a journey.

Rather than dwell on how we got to where we are, we should be looking forward and identifying opportunities for expanding our services that will benefit the public. Self-initiation will help to remove the barriers for a large number of people seeking to maintain proper oral health.

This is a major achievement – and we did it together. It was a collective effort on the part of many people that I would like to recognize and thank. To our members, the grassroots, I extend my appreciation for your unwavering support, for your patience and for your commitment to ODHA through your ongoing membership. Special thanks to the volunteer lobbyists who worked tirelessly to get our message to MPPs and government officials.

To the innovators, the pioneers who set up their own mobile services and clinics and paved the way for others to follow, you have my deepest respect and thanks.

Next, I would like to congratulate and pay tribute to former ODHA presidents who played a vital and particular role in pushing our issue forward and getting it on the government's agenda. A very special thank you to Penny White, who served as President last year when the government was developing amendments to the Act in Bill 171; to Michele Carrick and Michelle Clement, who were relentless in their political lobbying at Queen's Park; to Catherine Grater-Nakamura, Sandra

MESSAGE	
FROM THE	
ODHA	
PRESIDENT	
Melanie Doyle	

Lawlor, Jeanine Nighswander, Patricia Spencer, Patricia Manacki, Sharon Bessette, Cheryl Cancelli and the Presidents who preceded them.

We are grateful to the McGuinty government for recognizing dental hygiene's contributions to Ontario's healthcare system and for making accessible oral care a reality.

**'It's been quite a journey...
we should all be proud of
our achievement'**

George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, deserves special credit as the driving force behind Bill 171. He involved ODHA throughout the legislative process, and invited our input that helped shape the amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act*.

We also recognize the politicians and

bureaucrats who became champions for ODHA's issue. We especially appreciate the assistance and co-operation from Minister Smitherman's staff and the encouragement and ongoing support from MPPs, including the Hon. Donna Cansfield, Liberal MPP-Etobicoke Centre (Minister of Transportation); the Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Liberal MPP-Don Valley West (Minister of Education); and the Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Liberal MPP-Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs).

For the past two years, ODHA's government relations consultant, Kim Donaldson, has worked diligently on our behalf to keep the "order" issue top of mind for government decision-makers. Our sincere thanks to Kim and The Capital Hill Group.

And finally, I'd like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the ODHA staff, and, in particular, our Executive Director Margaret Carter, whose leadership and expertise on healthcare issues and government process have been instrumental in guiding the Board through all the meetings and presentations during the past four years.

We have all earned the right to celebrate – to pat each other on the back. We did it and we did it as a team. We should all be proud of our achievement. Congratulations and thank you! •

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Mission Statement: The Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association supports member needs and advocates for the profession of dental hygiene.

Dental hygienists achieve independence

An issue that has dominated the profession for almost 14 years has come to a successful conclusion with the enactment of the amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act*.

"This is a major breakthrough for the public and for the profession of dental hygiene, said ODHA President Melanie Doyle. "It is an exciting time for dental hygiene and a truly momentous achievement for ODHA and all those who worked so hard on this issue."

"The new legislation has the potential to change the way preventive care is offered in Ontario. Dental hygiene is a mobile profession. With restrictions removed, dental hygienists can take their services where they are needed, subject to regulatory college standards and procedures."

Amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act* are contained in Bill 171, which was initiated by George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. He said, "The McGuinty government recognizes the important role that dental hygienists play in oral care and the benefits for the public. The ability to self-initiate is a significant step forward for the profession and one that will increase access to dental hygiene care for many Ontarians."

ODHA Executive Director Margaret Carter calls the new legislative amendments a turning point in the profession's history and in the delivery of healthcare in Ontario. "By making accessible oral care a reality, the government has recognized dental hygiene as a major contributor and partner in Ontario's healthcare system," she said.

Throughout the legislative process, ODHA worked closely with the provincial government and helped shape the amendments to the *Dental Hygiene Act*.

"We are proud of this very important piece of legislation," said Minister Smitherman. "The ODHA is to be applauded for keeping the lines of communication open and for working together with the dental profession to bring this issue forward."

Those who are expected to benefit most from the new legislation are low-income families, the uninsured and those who are physically unable to get to a dental office such as the sick or the homebound, resi-

'A step forward for the profession and the delivery of healthcare in Ontario'



A proud moment: Margaret Carter (left) and Penny White give two thumbs up for achieving success in removing the restrictions that tie dental hygiene to dentistry.

dents in long-term care homes and those living in remote areas.

Many dental hygienists are prepared and committed to take their services to these under-served groups, whether they operate their own mobile service or work independently in a clinic or community centre.

Following are some reactions and comments to the new legislation:

"We are proud of this piece of legislation. It is a significant step forward for the dental hygiene profession and one that will increase access to oral care for many Ontarians."

George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"Congratulations dental hygiene. This is a momentous occasion for the profession and a great step forward in improving access to care for the First Nations Children of Ontario. I'm very proud to belong to ODHA, which had the courage and vision to see this challenge through to completion."

Penny White, RDH
Ontario co-ordinator, Children's Oral Health Initiative, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Ontario Region

"I consider this to be a progressive step on the part of the provincial government."

David Cameron
President & CEO, ALS Canada

"I'm so thrilled we are at this stage in dental hygiene... that barriers are being broken down and all citizens of Ontario have easier access to oral hygiene care, especially clients with special needs."

Jane Waites, RDH
ALS dental hygiene outreach co-ordinator

"Finally!! Thank you ODHA. It's time we were able to stand on our own two feet. This should encourage us all to be ongoing and active members of our provincial Association."

Griha Craveiro, RRDH
Restorative clinician, Mississauga

"This is fabulous – and a long time coming. Not only is it important for the future of oral health in Ontario, but it opens doors for dental hygienists to be an integral part of the primary healthcare system."

Tammy Gouweloos, RDH
Owner and operator of Barrie Dental Hygiene

"It's been a long journey. I'm looking forward to an improvement in access to care."

Marg Walsh, RDH
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

"I have an aging mother who is becoming frail and has difficulty getting around. I would welcome the opportunity to have a dental hygienist provide in-home service."

Judy Doran
A resident of Timmins

How to self-initiate

Those who want to self-initiate must apply to the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO) and receive authority to do so. Once you have the "seal of approval" from the college, you can self-initiate without an order, subject to college regulations.

Until you have CDHO approval, continue working as you normally would. The CDHO is completing its development of the application process for approval to self-initiate and will inform you once it is in place. •