

ONTARIO HEALTH COALITION SUPPORTS PUBLIC DENTAL CARE

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(TORONTO) – “Public dental care to cover everyone is welcome news from NDP Leader Andrea Horwath,” says Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition. “We stand in full support of public dental care. Expanding the principles of Medicare to include dental care makes sense, it’s long overdue.

“The Coalition takes issue with those who respond to the positive expansion of services that improve the quality of lives of Ontarians in the public interest. There is far too little critical response to unfactual and damaging statements about Ontarians not being able to afford these programs and services.

“We must challenge head-on this notion that our society, one of the richest in the world, cannot afford to take care of each other like this. People are paying already for dental care – and they’re paying more than they would through a publicly-administered non-profit plan – and getting less.

“What is unaffordable for far too many of us is paying out-of-pocket when you are elderly without much income, or sick, or in an emergency. What the naysayers will never tell you is that Ontario has the lowest funding for all our public services of any province in Canada. There is considerable room to improve funding, even just to come up to the average of the rest of the country. This means the wealthy must pay their fair share, as they did in generations past. If we all contribute fairly, then we all will benefit fairly from the expanded services we all need.

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“We are pleased that Ontario’s politicians are raising expectations of what government can do to improve lives and create a compassionate society. We are asking our supporters to speak out in support of this initiative, and of all the initiatives to bring a comprehensive and universal public drug coverage program for all Canadians, to push to rebuild our hospital capacity, to restore beds and services to meet people’s needs, and to build up long-term care for Ontarians.

“We can and must stop the dangerous trend of diminishing expectations, because these only hurt ordinary people and benefit the wealthiest, who no longer want to contribute their fair share,” Mehra said. “We can build upon the amazing public health system we currently have and expand it to fill in the gaps, redress backlogs and restore the vision of a comprehensive health system for all people.”

Contact: Dana Boettger, OHC Communications and Administration, 647-208-4436 (cellular)