



The Honourable David Caplan
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, ON
M7A 2C4

April 29, 2009

Dear Mr. Caplan,

On behalf of the Ontario Dental Assistants Association, I am writing to express our deep disappointment regarding your recent decision to extend the timelines for the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Committee (HPRAC) projects. This extension means that the review for the regulation of Ontario dental assistants has been postponed to 2012 - two years later than the initial deadline.

Dental assistants are regulated in eight Canadian provinces with Ontario and Quebec being the exceptions. The ODAA was led to believe that our request would be reviewed and recommendations made by 2010. This phase of the process would bring us closer to a goal that has been highly anticipated by our 8,000 ODAA members as well as other dental assistants and dental healthcare professionals throughout the country. This is a devastating blow to our profession.

Though we appreciate that the economic crisis in Ontario and the rest of the world is a priority, we also believe that the review work previously committed to by the Ontario government should proceed as originally planned. It is in the interest of public health and safety.

The regulation of dental assistants will mean that only those with formal education, who have passed the appropriate entry to practice examinations can work as dental assistants. Dental assistants perform intra-oral duties, are responsible for infection control and take radiographs, which is considered to be a controlled act in most other provinces. Yet, many dental assistants in Ontario are still trained on the job to perform these critical duties that could potentially impact on their patients' health and well-being. Due to the sensitive nature of dental assistant duties, such as infection control, there is a growing belief among the Ontario dental community that the regulation of dental assistants is required, and that it should occur sooner rather than later.

The lack of regulation for dental assistants in Ontario also creates labour barriers when Ontario dental assistants move to another province. Because Ontario dental assistants are unregulated, they are subject to an expensive clinical practical evaluation according to the labour mobility agreement established by Canadian Dental Assisting Regulatory Authorities. This issue can only be rectified with the regulation of our profession.

HPRAC is highly regarded and appreciated for the amount of work that they have undertaken under the present Liberal leadership. Yet there is still much to be done, including the regulation of Ontario dental assistants. The interests of public safety are paramount.

We appreciate the work of you and your ministry staff, and we recognize that prioritizing project schedules must be incredibly difficult. However, we strongly believe that the review of Ontario dental assistants is critically important and cannot be delayed any longer. We are respectfully asking that the HPRAC review of Ontario dental assistants be rescheduled to its originally planned date.

We look forward to working with you and the Ontario government in this endeavour.

Regards,

Darlene Leiska CDA II
President, Ontario Dental Assistants Association
c.c Ms. Barbara Sullivan
Chair, HPRAC