

Health Unit Announces New Dental Clinic Location

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a new program for kids 17 years and under who do not have access to any form of dental coverage. Eligible kids will receive basic dental care, such as cleaning, x-rays and fillings at no cost. Dental services can be provided either by your dentist or by the Peterborough County-City Health Unit through its new clinics (ready by spring 2011). To find out if your child qualifies, please contact the Peterborough County-City Health Unit at (705) 743-1000 or visit www.pcchu.ca.

The clinic will be located in Peterborough Square. It was very important that the clinic be located downtown so it is easy for people to reach by public transit and close to other health and social services. The clinic is supported by Healthy Smiles Ontario. It will be an important enhancement to our community's local public health infrastructure and a place where clients can be connected to other public health programs as well.

The Health Unit will be investing approximately \$567,000 to develop the new clinic at Peterborough Square unit which will feature two treatment rooms (with an optional third treatment room), a reception area, client waiting room, fully accessible washroom and private consultation office.

The clinic will serve as a gateway to clients' better health as Health Unit staff can provide families with information related to nutrition, food access, tobacco-free living, parenting, and a host of other public health resources.

“Accessing dental care for children can be a challenge for some Ontario families, particularly for those families without dental benefit coverage. Preventing and treating oral problems at a young age will improve the overall health of Ontarians resulting in reduced health costs down the road,” stated MPP Jeff Leal.

The Healthy Smiles Ontario program provides preventive dental care at no cost to children and youth who:

- Are 17 years and under.
- Are members of a household with an Adjusted Family Net Income of \$20,000 per year or less
- Don't have access to any form of dental coverage.

Oral health is important not only to individuals' appearance and sense of well-being, but also to overall health. Cavities and gum disease may contribute to many serious conditions, such as diabetes and respiratory diseases. Untreated cavities can also be painful and lead to serious infections. Studies are also currently examining whether there is a link between poor oral health and heart disease and between poor oral health and women delivering pre-term, low birth rate babies.

There are 12.6% of residents in the city of Peterborough who are living on low income. The Health Unit is already seeing a demand for the Healthy Smiles Ontario program with 100 children and youth signed up so far. The benefits extend beyond the immediate health needs of these 100 young people and also give much needed peace of mind to their parents as well.

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