



January 2019

917 Lesperance Rd.
Tecumseh, Ontario
Canada, N8W 1W9

RE: Support for Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Oral Health Programs

Dear Mayor McNamara and Members of Council,

On behalf of Workforce WindsorEssex, I am writing this letter to express our support for the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit's work in improving oral health in Windsor-Essex. We recognize the importance of oral health for low-income adults and youth in our community, and the impact oral health can have on their employment potential and their quality of life.

As an organization that creates labour market tools, research, guides and events to help jobseekers, employers, students, educators, and service providers, we recognize oral health as an important social determinant for employment. We know from anecdotal evidence and from research that poor oral health can negatively impact an individual's self-esteem and their interpersonal relations, thus impacting their employment prospects.

We recognize poor oral health and its consequences as an issue that disproportionately affects community members who are low-income. The Canadian Community Health Survey in 2012 found that low-income Ontarians were significantly less likely to have visited a dentist in the previous year, and that low-income Ontarians reported more tooth loss, pain/discomfort, and social limitations due to oral health problems. Research shows that providing oral healthcare to low-income individuals contributes significantly to their inclusion in the workforce, engaging individuals in employment who may have otherwise been inhibited by oral health issues. According to a study by dental and public health experts from the University of Toronto published in 2016, employment outcomes for social assistance recipients in Ontario who had also received dental healthcare over one year were significantly better than for social assistance recipients who had not received dental healthcare.

Oral health is a relevant challenge in Windsor-Essex. According to the WECHU's Oral Health Report 2018 Update, approximately 1 in 4 individuals in Windsor-Essex have no dental insurance coverage, and the percentage of children with decay and/or requiring urgent care increased by over 50% between 2011/2012 and 2016/2017. We believe that the preventative and responsive oral healthcare programs that WECHU operates are important pieces in ensuring that our regional workforce meets its potential, and that investments in these programs are valuable contributions to our community's social and economic development.



Michelle Suchiu
Executive Director
Workforce WindsorEssex