



WHAT WE HEARD

PROPOSED *DENTAL HYGIENIST PROFESSION REGULATIONS* UNDER THE *HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONS ACT*

JANUARY | 2025



Une version française de ce document est disponible.

K'áhshó got'jne xadā k'é hederi ʔedjht'é yerinowę ni dé dúle.
Dene Kádá

ʔerihth'ís Dēne Sų́iné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔą ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yóthı.
Dēne Sų́iné

Edı gondı dehgáh got'je zhatıé k'éé edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahıı.
Dene Zhatıé

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijáhch'uu zhit yinothtan jı', diits'át ginohkhii.
Dinjii Zhu' Ginjik

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.
Inuvialuktun

Ċ'đđ ɳɳ'ḅΔĊ ʌʎLJΔʎĊ Δ.ḅ'ɳĊĊĊ'ʎLḅɳ'ḅ, ɳĊĊ'ɳ'ḅĊ ɳ'ḅĊĊ'ḅ'ḅĊɳĊ.
Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.
Inuinnaqtun

kīspin ki nitawihthīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.
nēhīyawēwin

Tłjchq yatı k'èè. Dı wegodi newq dè, gots'o gone de.
Tłjchq

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The regulation of the dental hygiene profession in the Northwest Territories (NWT) will move from the *Dental Auxiliaries Act* (DAA) to the proposed *Dental Hygienist Profession Regulations* (Proposed Regulations) under the *Health and Social Services Professions Act* on December 1, 2025, following amendments made to the HSSPA in October 2023 through Private Members Bill 80, *Dental Hygienists Profession Statutes Amendment Act*.

The Department of Health and Social Services (Department) worked closely with an Advisory Committee, including NWT dental hygienists, to develop proposed key elements for the Proposed Regulations. The proposed key elements are based on the regulation of dental hygienists in other Canadian jurisdictions and the regulation capacity of the Department.

From September 12, 2024, to October 14, 2024, dental hygienists, Indigenous governments, stakeholders, and residents of the NWT were invited to provide comments and feedback on the [“Proposed Dental Hygienist Profession Regulations under the Health and Social Services Act: Key Elements”](#) (Key Elements). The Key Elements document outlined the provisions for the Proposed Regulations under the HSSPA that will differ from what is currently set out for dental hygienists under the DAA.

It is anticipated that license expiry and renewal requirements currently set out in the DAA will remain the same in the Proposed Regulations. The most significant change being proposed from the current regulatory framework is the addition of an expanded scope category for registration. This will allow NWT dental hygienists to practice their full skill set, improve recruitment and retention of dental hygienists in the NWT, and align with the scope of practice of dental hygienists across Canada.

Objectives

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is proposing to move the regulation of the dental hygienist profession under the HSSPA, an “umbrella” Act that came into force in March 2022. This transition aims to modernize regulation, harmonize the scope of practice with national standards, and fulfill the GNWT's goal of unifying various health and social services professions under a single law. This approach will foster improved access to care and aligns the NWT with national standards, while also broadening the scope of practice for dental hygienists.

The purpose of the public engagement was to gather input about the Proposed Regulations and how they could best support the profession of dental hygiene and the population of the NWT.

Methodology

Materials for the public engagement were designed to elicit engagement and feedback on the proposed key elements for the regulation of dental hygienists under the HSSPA, including an expanded scope of practice for dental hygienists in the NWT.

The following materials were developed and made available to the public on the [GNWT's Have Your Say](#) website:

- Proposed *Dental Hygienist Profession Regulations* under the *Health and Social Services Act: Key Elements*

Results

In total, there were 10 written submissions received. All 10 respondents identified support for the proposed amendments and were in favour of the work going forward. All comments have been summarized in this report.

Background

NWT dental hygienists and dental therapists are currently regulated under the DAA, which came into force in 1988 with only minor amendments since.

In March 2023, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Kam Lake introduced the *Dental Hygienists Profession Statutes Amendment Act* to move the regulation of dental hygienist to new regulations under the HSSPA by December 1, 2025. The Bill received assent and came into force on October 6, 2023, with the exception of the provision designating dental hygienists as a profession to which the HSSPA applies (s.2), which comes into force December 1, 2025. Dental therapists will continue to be regulated under the DAA, which will be renamed as the *Dental Therapists Act* on December 1, 2025.

Each profession has their own regulation under the HSSPA that covers the specific registration requirements related to each profession, including but not limited to, scope of practice, standards of practice and codes of ethics, protected titles, training, education, and continuing competency.

Bringing dental hygienists under the HSSPA will support:

- the modernization of the regulatory framework and consistency with the other professions already regulated under the HSSPA;
- a scope of practice that is more in line with the regulation of dental hygienists across Canada;
- providing NWT residents with better access to dental care;
- the better utilization of dental hygienists' skills and abilities; and

- the Department’s intention with the HSSPA to work towards bringing all currently regulated health and social services professions under a single umbrella statute.

Public Engagement

Engagement on the proposed amendments took place between September 12 and October 14, 2024, when the Key Elements were made available on the GNWT’s website.

The goal of the engagement was to solicit feedback from Indigenous governments, dental hygienists, stakeholders, and NWT residents on the Proposed Regulations.

This report provides a summary of the feedback received. The views represented in this report reflect the priorities and concerns of respondents. Responses should not be construed as representative of the Department’s position or views. Conclusions or recommendations based on the concerns raised are not provided.

The feedback from this engagement, as summarized in this report, will be considered by the Department in developing the Proposed Regulations.

What We Heard

The Department received 10 written submissions from:

- The College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario,
- The College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia,
- Three (3) dental hygienists,
- Two (2) members of the public.
- One (1) osteopathic doctor,
- One (1) insurance agency, and
- One (1) member of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association.

Summaries of the responses are provided below and are organized by key element as proposed in the Key Elements document. This report provides only a summary of comments received during the engagement period. Any feedback not included below will still be considered by the Department when moving forward with this work.

Responses on the Proposed Key Elements

Removal of the Dentist Supervision Requirement

- Of the 10 responses received, 7 responses specifically stated that removing the dentist supervision provision will be very beneficial to dental hygienists, as well as for the

population of the NWT, by allowing better access to dental care. It was also highlighted that this change also benefits the population of the NWT who live in communities where there is no dentist and they are unable to travel to larger centres for care.

- One response noted that not requiring a dental hygienist to work under a dentist would allow for travel to communities to provide required dental care that could reach a larger portion of the population.
- One response noted that this substantive change could have a positive impact on employer plans by potentially reducing unnecessary cost and would align NWT with other Canadian jurisdictions.

Expanded Scope

- Many responses supported the proposal of dividing the Register into a General Register and Expanded Register as it will allow dental hygienists in the NWT to practice their full scope and provide a broader range of services to the population of the NWT and increasing access to care.
- One response noted that prescribing fluoride does not need to be on schedule 1 drugs and is within the scope of a dental hygienist already.
- One response pointed out that the wording did not properly reflect that restorative procedures can be performed on primary and permanent teeth. Additionally, the respondent recommended the language also be clearer to demonstrate that the dental hygienist would only be filling the restorative prep of a tooth that the dentist has prepared for the restoration, and they would not be placing crowns, bridges, dentures, or implants.
- One response pointed out that the language under Orthodontic Procedures and Restorative Procedures around requiring a dentist on sight to oversee orthodontic dental hygiene practices is restrictive and recommended clarifying that there just needs to be a dentist on staff to collaborate with.
- One response recommended that there be a way for an insurer to identify if the hygienist is licensed under the General or Expanded Register so they can confirm the hygienist is practicing within their scope of practice.

Protected Titles

- One response recommended adding Dental Hygiene Practitioners to the list of protected title.
- One response also recommended including the French versions of each protected title.

Registration

- One response questioned how the public will know if a dental hygienist is on the expanded register versus the general register.

- One response offered alternate wording for the practical experience requirement provision.
- Three responses recommended adding the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation to the eligibility criteria, allowing dental hygienists that completed their post-secondary education in the United States, as the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada has a reciprocal agreement with the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation.
- One response recommended that the Registrar be responsible for determining the approved educational training needed to be deemed competent in any expanded-scope activities rather than the Minister.
- One response recommended that the education and training parameters required to be on the expanded scope should be published and readily available for applicants.

Scope of Practice

- One response recommended adding more pieces to the scope of practice definition, rather than keeping it broad.
- One response mentioned Nitrous Oxide delivery as an option for specialized patients and Laser diode treatments to limit bacterial overload in periodontal pockets to be included in the scope of practice.

Next Steps

The public engagement process represents the beginning stages of working towards the larger goal of enhancing dental hygiene services that improve overall public access to dental care. The results of the public engagement are summarized in this What We Heard Report and, together with cross-jurisdictional reviews and additional policy research will inform the development of the Proposed Regulations.