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County of Essex In Support of the 2018 Oral Health Report

Warden Tom Bain and County Council members,

I would like to speak to you on behalf of the pediatric dental specialists of Windsor-Essex County. We are here to be witnesses to the severity of the oral health problems in our community. The health unit report is sobering. It has identified Windsor-Essex County to have a tooth decay rate two times that of any other comparable city in Ontario. What is more sobering is realizing that most of the children that we as pediatric dentists see are under the age of 4. So those children may not even be part of the statistics of this report.

We would simply like to show you what we see every day in our community. These are children that clearly are suffering from pain and infection problems and are unable to seek care themselves. They do not have the ability to decide if they do not want treatment or when they should go and seek treatment or what kind of treatment is best. The simple volume of patients we are seeing makes it impossible to treat all of them as quickly as we as pediatric dentists would like or what the recommendations are according to provincial wait time strategies for hospital management of pediatric oral problems.

The slides we are showing you are the children we see. They are all children from our community. The slides tell their own story.

In summary, I would like to emphasize the importance of supporting the Health Unit recommendations. Although the discussion often reverts back to fluoride, the problem in our community is much more complex than that. Fluoride supplementation to municipal water is one component. It is imperative that funding for early education continue, that every child sees a dentist by their first birthday and as a community we aggressively insist that the provincial government more appropriately fund the HSO program for hospital treatment of these children and community treatment for these and all children. This would go a long way in improving access to care, which would reduce the impact of the cavity rate on the children. It is through the generous and often volunteer services of the dental community by both specialists and general dentists that many children receive care.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here and I encourage you to look deeper. What do we want for our community and especially our children? As our representatives you are our voice and you are in a position to advocate for Essex County and make change happen.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alex Meriano, Dr. Amy Durocher, Dr. James Starr, Dr. Richard Tann and Dr. Anne Young