



CNC expands access to dental care in long-term care through federal funding

Prince George, B.C.

What you need to know:

- The College of New Caledonia (CNC) received funding through the **Oral Health Access Fund**, a federal initiative led by Health Canada.
 - Funding supports mobile dentistry equipment, enabling care to be delivered directly in community settings such as long-term care homes.
 - CNC dental hygiene students provided care to 23 residents at Simon Fraser Lodge between February and April 2026.
 - The initiative enhances hands-on learning opportunities while improving access to oral health care for underserved populations.
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The College of New Caledonia (CNC) is expanding access to oral health care in Northern B.C. thanks to a federal investment through the Oral Health Access Fund.

Led by Health Canada, the Oral Health Access Fund is part of the broader Canadian Dental Care Plan. The fund aims to expand access to oral health care by supporting projects that reduce or remove barriers to accessing oral health care for targeted populations.

Through this funding, CNC began purchasing mobile dental equipment in October, with all equipment received by the end of March 2026. The investment has enabled the College to effectively create seven fully portable dental operatories, complete with patient and provider chairs, suction and water systems, drills, and essential tools, allowing care to be delivered outside of traditional clinical settings.

The portable units are compact and transportable, with foldable chairs and equipment that can be packed into a vehicle, making it possible to bring comprehensive dental care directly to community sites.

“This project reflects CNC’s commitment to both student learning and community care,” said Diane Horita, Dental Hygiene Faculty and Program Coordinator at the College of New Caledonia. “By bringing dental services directly into long-term care settings, we’re creating meaningful hands-on learning opportunities for our students while helping improve access

to care for seniors and underserved populations across Northern B.C. This funding allows us to meet people where they are and strengthen the connection between education and community wellness.”

Between February and April 2026, second-year dental hygiene students used the mobile equipment to deliver on-site care to 23 residents at Simon Fraser Lodge. The services were provided at no cost to residents, many of whom face barriers accessing routine dental care. Each participating student completed approximately 15 hours of clinical placement at the lodge, gaining valuable real-world experience while serving a population with significant oral health needs. The rotation also allowed students to see more patients than they typically would in a traditional clinical environment.

"Our residents truly enjoyed welcoming the students and taking part in this program. It's a wonderful way to support their oral health while also providing valuable social interaction," said Domonique Dodge, Assistant Director of Care, Simon Fraser Lodge. "Programs like this make a real difference, particularly for residents who may not otherwise have easy access to dental care.

"It also gives our residents a sense of purpose, as they know they're contributing to the students' education and helping shape future professionals."

The initiative builds on previous collaboration between CNC and Simon Fraser Lodge, expanding from a smaller-scale partnership into a more comprehensive, fully equipped mobile care model.

The program will continue until March 2028, with final reporting underway for the first year. CNC anticipates ongoing opportunities to expand mobile dental services to additional community settings in the future.

The Oral Health Access Fund is designed to improve access to care for underserved populations, while also strengthening training opportunities for the next generation of oral health professionals, objectives that are clearly reflected in CNC's approach.

About the Oral Health Access Fund

The Oral Health Access Fund is a grants and contributions program led by Health Canada. The fund aims to expand access to oral health care by supporting projects that reduce or remove barriers to accessing oral health care for targeted populations. The fund supports projects that:

- Aim to improve training and capacity for oral health care providers.
- Connect people to oral health care.
- Address dental schools immediate need to attract patients to the schools' clinics and provide students with hands-on training.



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