

September 22, 2021

Dear Hamilton City Council Members,

On behalf of local optometrists, who are the primary eye care providers for many of your constituents, we are writing to request that the Hamilton Council call on the Ontario Government to immediately enter into formal negotiations and address the chronic underfunding of eye care.

We would like to provide you with an update on our discussions with the Ontario government. Unfortunately, since September 1, millions of Ontarians have lost access to primary eye care services because the Ontario government continues to neglect optometry services. Here is a brief update on what has been happening:

- The Ministry of Health did not communicate with optometrists from December 5, 2020 until August 5, 2021.
- An independent third party accounting firm (BDO) determined that the average operating cost (rent, staff, and equipment) to provide an eye exam in Ontario (without doctor compensation) was \$75.51.
- The government has offered optometrists an increase of 8.48%. Such an increase would move the average payment for an eye exam from \$44.65 to \$48.43 requiring the average Ontario optometrist today to still pay more than \$27 out of pocket to examine an OHIP-insured patient.
- Such an offer would ensure that the eye exams Ontarians receive will continue to be the worst funded in Canada. To reach the funding levels of the next lowest-funded province (Manitoba) in the country, a 65% increase in funding is needed. Our equipment, staffing, and rent costs are not lower than those in Manitoba.

Provincial Comparison of Senior's Eye Exam Fees

Ontario Schedule of Benefits Elements	Ontario	Alberta	Manitoba	Quebec
Relevant history, visual acuity, ocular motility, refraction, advice/instruction	\$47.00 V406	\$80.70 B650	\$45.02 8545	\$54.75 9001
Ophthalmoscopy				\$4.00 9024
Slit lamp exam				
Visual field by confrontation field*				\$8.00 9007
Tonometry*			\$10.89 9726	
Dilated fundus examination*		\$56.32 B900	\$21.27 9728	\$33.15 9020
Supplement for 75 years and up				\$7.00 9021
Total Fee	\$47.00	\$137.02	\$77.18	\$106.90

*required in accordance with generally accepted professional standards

- The government also offered a one-time \$39 million payment to help with underfunding of the last decade. This averages to just over \$1 per exam for every optometry service performed over the last decade. It is focused on the past and does nothing to address Ontario's broken and unsustainable eye care system. **It is a complete waste of taxpayers' dollars.**
- While the government states that this offer is fair, the math is simple. Ontarians understand how this government is continuing to follow previous governments by neglecting eye care and exploiting the valuable services optometrists provide. It simply is not a sustainable solution.
- To this day, the government refuses to enter into negotiations where they will agree to either cover the complete overhead costs required to provide an exam or ensure Ontario optometrists will not remain the lowest funded in all of Canada. Ontario optometrists are waiting at the table for them to agree to either of those very basic and fair principles.
- Eye surgeons (ophthalmologists) across our province work together with optometrists to provide eye care for Ontarians. Many have written letters to the Ontario government in support of fixing eye care. One Ontario ophthalmologist states:

"I believe that many in government do not fully understand the impact of the Optometric role and may minimize it's standing in the delivery of health care to all Ontarians. The net effect of this misunderstanding, in my opinion, is exactly why Ontario Optometrists are underpaid and undervalued."

Eye health has a direct impact on an individual's quality of life, and we will continue to advocate for our patients whose lives are negatively impacted by the Ontario government's lack of interest in this aspect of essential healthcare.

Although it is the province that needs to fix the issue, the underfunding of eye care affects municipalities too.

Optometrists are located in over 200 communities, making us the most accessible primary eye care professionals in the healthcare system. In many of these locations, we are the **only** providers of comprehensive general eye care. In Hamilton specifically, in-school vision screenings have been conducted by the EYEMAC program led by McMaster Ophthalmologist Dr. Kourosh Sabri. Children who fail to pass the vision screening are then referred to local optometrists for further assessment. Optometrists not only assess and treat refractive and binocular vision issues, we are also critical in monitoring, treating and diagnosing a plethora of eye diseases and dealing with eye related emergencies. This is why municipalities like Hamilton must stand up for their residents and help protect access to OHIP optometry services.

As of this afternoon, 23 municipalities (see list below) have passed motions in support of OHIP optometry services.

Town of Oakville (June 21)	Municipality of Trent Lakes (September 7)
Town of Fort Frances (July 12)	Township of Howick (September 7)
Town of Rainy River (July 12)	Lennox and Addington County (September 8)
City of Cambridge (July 27)	Township of Baldwin (September 13)
Township of Emo (July 28)	Town of Petrolia (September 13)
Municipality of North Perth (August 9)	Township of North Huron (September 13)
City of Kawartha Lakes (August 10)	Township of North Glengarry (September 13)
Township of Chapple (August 17)	Town of Amherstburg (September 13)
Township of La Vallee (August 18)	City of Niagara Falls (September 14)
Town of Whitby (August 23)	Municipality of Bayham (September 17)
Township of Drummond/North Elmsley (August 24)	Town of Prescott (September 20)
Town of Minto (September 7)	

We are requesting that our municipal council stand up for eye care by asking the provincial government to commit to reforms so that optometrists are compensated fairly compared to their colleagues all across Canada. Please pass such a motion as soon as possible so that residents can continue to access the quality eye care that they deserve.

Should you have any questions, or would like more information, please let us know. We and our patients hope that we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Drs. Kathleen Hill & Tyler Brown
Co-Presidents of the Hamilton District Society of Optometrists
Ancaster Eye Clinic

On behalf of the following optometrists:

Dr. Sheldon Salaba
Dr. Kelly Anderson
Dr. Brian Paul
Advanced Vision Eyewear Boutique

Dr. Tracy McMurter
FyiDoctors Ancaster

Dr. Breanne Facey
Dr. Tracy Brodie
Dr. Anjali Pathak
Perspective Vision

Dr. Derrick Shebib

Dr. Raj Devram

Dr. Kevin Ahokas
Dr. Anukool Chadda
Mountain Eye Care

Dr. Daina Sanderson
Dr. Mariam Hermiz
Dr. Laura Thomas
Dr. Betty Johnson
Dr. Katie Mann
Dundas Optometry Clinic

Dr. Meet Chande
West Mountain Eye Clinic

Dr. Jennifer Patriquin
Dr. Jan van Wyngaarden
Valleytown Eye Care

Dr. Susana Sebestyen
Sea Best Enterprises Inc.

Dr. Graehem Sayer
Dr. Aynsley Tinkham
LUX Eye Care

Dr. Karen Bochnak

Andy D'Ortenzio
Sam D'Ortenzio
Family Eye Care

Dr. Christine Misener
Dr. Zara Akhter
Dr. Judy Parks
Ancaster Eye Clinic

Dr. Cynthia Bahoshy
Brantford Eye Care

Dr. Marnie Richmond

Dr. Unyong Tina Jang & Associates
Eastgate Eye Clinic

Dr. Gursharn Bering

Dr. Mark Dakak
Stoney Creek Eye Care

Dr. Kristyn Pozzer
Dr. Patricia Fink Optometry

Dr. Todd Ruhl
Flamborough Family Eyecare

Dr. Bitu Moeinifar
Dr. Richard Combden
Spectrum Eye Care

Dr. George De Rubeis
Dr. Felicia De Rubeis
Dr. Jeffrey McAlear
Dr. Michael Starcevic
Dr. Kristin Person
Dr. Amy Reid
Optometry Clinic of Stoney Creek

Dr. Lorelei Zeiler

Dr. Sam Alfano

Dr. Camilo Garzon
Clarity Optometry

Dr. Jonathan Hepburn
Creative Vision Optical

Dr. Gabrielle Gilbert
Dr. Derrick Thornborrow
Dr. Lyndsey Kay
Waterdown Optometric Clinic

Dr. Aman Dhaliwal
Dr. Dhaliwal & Associates

Dr. Yasamin Al Hashimi
Village Creek Optometry

Dr. Jun Chuong
Dr. Otto CW Lee & Associates

Dr. Vikram Singh
Dr. Priya Maharaj
Dr. Victoria Cadman
Ancaster Family Eyecare

Dr. Jamie Cho
Binbrook Eye Care

Dr. Charlie Alfano
Freelton Eye Care

Dr. Amanda Beck

Dr. Edward V. Eves

Dr. Doris Chow
Dr. Nardone & Associates

Dr. Jasjeet Shinger
Dr. Casthoory Viswanathan
Perception Eyecare

Dr. Uma Ratnasingam

Dr. Phil Vrkljan

Dr. Jessie Chu

Dr. Carolyn Kwiat

Dr. Michelle Tai

Dr. Petra Costa