

July 30<sup>th</sup> 2021

Dear Mayor Black,

As a local optometrist, I am writing to request that the Town of Carleton Place Council call on the Ontario Government to immediately enter into formal negotiations and address the chronic underfunding of eye care.

For more than 30 years, previous Ontario governments have ignored our requests for a sustainable funding system.

Did you know in 1989 the Ontario government paid \$39.15 for OHIP-insured eye exams? Did you know that today, 32 years later, the government only contributes an average of \$44.65 per exam? That's a 14% increase over three decades! With over four million services performed annually under OHIP, this level of funding is not sustainable.

If the government doesn't act before September 1st, 2021, millions of Ontarians are at risk of losing their access to eye care. I'm concerned about what this will mean for my patients and my community. We know the ones who will be impacted most are children, seniors and adults with diabetes or certain eye diseases. Due to this lack of funding, optometrists are also limited in their ability to invest in their practices and access to eye care in rural areas is especially threatened. This is not acceptable.

We are fighting for continued access to quality eye care and have two very reasonable requests:

- The government commits to a binding, formal negotiation process – the same way they do with other sectors;
- And the government commits to reforms that no longer require optometrists to have to pay out of their own pockets to see patients.

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. This is why municipalities must stand up for their residents and help protect access to OHIP optometry services.

So far, three municipalities (Town of Oakville, Town of Fort Frances, Town of Rainy River) have passed a motion asking that “the Provincial government address the OHIP-insured eye care immediately and enter into legally-binding negotiations with Ontario Optometrists to fund these services at least to the cost of delivery, prior to any job action taking place”.

I'm requesting that my municipal council approve a similar 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 me know. My patients and I hope that we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sameer Dedhar  
Owner/Optometrist at Heritage Optometric Clinic