

Optometrists of Ontario were forced to begin job action after years of trying to engage the Government of Ontario into meaningful negotiations. OHIP insured patients have been without primary eye care services for 7 weeks and counting. The current situation with the Ministry of Health is extremely frustrating. We are saddened that it has come to this and sincerely apologize for this inconvenience to you. Unfortunately, after 30 years of failed diplomacy, the Government has left us no choice. It costs the average Ontario optometrist \$80 to provide an eye exam - the government covers less than \$45 on average. It is illegal for optometrists in Ontario to accept private insurance or direct payment for these exams. We are fighting for a high-quality sustainable eye care system for you and your families.

Here is a brief summary of some of the more recent interactions with the Ford government:

- We were met with 8 months of silence after requesting formal negotiations back in December 2020.
- You may have heard that the Ministry of Health has offered optometrists \$39 million. To put this into context, over 13 years and 2500 optometrists in Ontario, that amounts to approximately \$1 per eye exam. It does not commit to any long term solution or mechanism to address the current crisis in eye care.
- You may have heard that the Ministry of Health has offered an 8.48% fee increase. That was on an antiquated exam rate from 2008 that still falls 40% short of meeting our cost to perform the services that we provide.
- As the most populated province in the country, compared to other provinces with publicly funded optometry services, Ontario is by far the lowest funded. Seniors' eye exams would have to increase by more than 65% to reach the next lowest-funded province, Manitoba, and by more than 125% to reach the next lowest-funded, Quebec. Please see chart attached for a provincial comparison of senior eye exams.
- You may have heard that the Ontario Association of Optometrists are not currently in negotiations with the Ministry of Health. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Health refuses to commit to the principle of either cost recovery or ensuring Ontario optometrists will not still be the lowest compensated for exams in all of Canada. If they were to agree to either of those principles we would be in negotiations immediately.

With each week that the job action continues, wait lists for OHIP patients lengthen by about 2 weeks as many patients have pre booked appointments that will also have to be cancelled as job action continues. We estimate that currently we will be rescheduling cancelled patients into 2022.

The Ministry of Health seems to think that people with diabetes requiring annual eye

exams and those being treated for eye disease or are having eye problems can just go see their family doctor or an ophthalmologist. As you are probably aware, that represents quite a logistical challenge as a referral by your optometrist or physician is almost always required to see an ophthalmologist or eye surgeon.

Greg Rickford has been unresponsive to our letters requesting a resolution to this matter. Mr. Rickford needs to hear from you, his constituents, on how this is affecting your ability to access eye care and your quality of life. You can reach out to Greg Rickford at 807 223-6456 or pay his office a visit at 439 Government Street. The more constituents that contact him the more likely the Ministry of Health will understand the important role that optimal vision and local eye care plays in your quality of life. You can also reach out to Christine Elliott, the Minister of Health, and Premier Doug Ford. We have listed their emails along with Greg Rickford's email address below. You can also go to saveeyecare.ca

We hope that by continuing to educate the MPPs and Ministry of Health on the vital role that optometrists play in the health care system that they will eventually see the light and fund eye examinations to the cost of providing the service.

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Be sure to visit our FaceBook page at Dr.TurcotteDr.Veneziano for current updates on this situation. Rest assured that once this situation has resolved we will contact you and do our best to reschedule your appointment in a timely fashion.

Sincerely,

Lisa Krasko-Turcotte, B.Sc.,
O.D.
Doriana Veneziano, B.Sc., O.D.

ONTARIO IS THE LOWEST PAID
IN CANADA

Our fees would have to increase by over 60% to reach the next lowest province. The bar graph compares Ontario to other provinces that fully fund eye care.

GOVERNMENT NEGLECT of OPTOMETRISTS:

