



MROO

Municipal Retirees
ORGANIZATION ONTARIO

Protecting the pensions and enhancing the
quality of life for all OMERS retirees

July 30, 2021

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
Government of Ontario
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 2J3

Via Email christine.elliott@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Elliott:

Re: Negotiations with Optometrists

The Municipal Retirees Organization Ontario (MROO) has more than 30,000 members and along with millions of Ontarians they pay for and benefit from many programs of the Ministry of Health and OHIP services under the *Health Insurance Act*. The MROO Board of Directors respectfully requests you to **direct the OHIP General Manager to immediately begin negotiations, in good faith, with the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO)** regarding provision of and payment for services covered by OHIP.

Any form of brinkmanship or failure to engage in constructive discussions about matters of health and safety of Ontarians is a great source of disappointment to our members. Accordingly, MROO is profoundly disappointed that the OAO, your Ministry and the General Manager of the Plan presently appear to be on a dangerous course to the brink of public health and safety. Although MROO does not condone tactics by optometrists such as withdrawing annual eye exam services for children and persons 65 and older, MROO members do support the call by the OAO for negotiations to begin immediately to determine reasonable payment for OHIP covered services. We understand it is illegal for Ontario optometrists to accept private insurance or direct payment from patients for services covered by OHIP under the *Health Insurance Act*.

It would be greatly appreciated if this matter of commencing negotiation of fair payment to optometrists for services rendered could be addressed before September 1, 2021. Access to eye care is a major determinant of health which supports seniors wanting and being able to remain in their own homes. Please ensure the OHIP General Manager fulfills the responsibility in §4(2) of the Act to “make payments for insured services, including the determination of eligibility and amount” by immediately starting discussions with the OAO. If it is not possible or the General Manager is unable to fulfill this

responsibility in a timely manner then perhaps it may be possible for you, as Minister, to refer the matter for review and input to an independent body similar to the Physician Payment Review Board or the Health Services Appeal and Review Board.

We understand the OHIP coverage for eye care services includes the following:

- People 65 years and older and those younger than 20 are covered by OHIP for a routine eye examination provided by either an optometrist or physician once every 12 months (plus any follow-up assessments that may be required).
- Specified ophthalmology services for patients of any age with specified medical conditions or diseases affecting the eyes are insured.
- Insured persons aged 20 to 64 years with specified medical conditions affecting the eye can receive an OHIP insured regular eye examination once every 12 months.
- Insured persons aged 20 to 64 with any of the following conditions can go directly to their optometrist or physician to receive an OHIP insured eye examination: diabetes mellitus, glaucoma, cataract, retinal disease, amblyopia, visual field defects, corneal disease, strabismus, recurrent uveitis, or optic pathway disease.

As noted above, starting September 1st Ontario optometrists will stop providing eye care to all patients covered by OHIP. This means many of our MROO members and other Ontario seniors will not be able to access the eye care they need. Surely the Ministry of Health is committed to continued provision of these services traditionally insured and covered by OHIP. Vision health contributes significantly to quality of life as we age.

Thank you very much for considering our input on behalf of our members and all seniors in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Keith Robicheau
President, MROO

cc Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility
Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care
Mr. Patrick Dicerni, ADM and General Manager, OHIP
Dr. Sheldon Salaba, President, Ontario Association of Optometrists
Mr. Justin Brown, CEO, Ontario Association of Optometrists
Mr. Ken Noakes, Executive Director, MROO
Members, MROO Board of Directors
Ms. Lucie Lombardo, Chair, MROO HSOS Advocacy Committee
Members, MROO HSOS Advocacy Committee