



“As doctors, it is our number one priority to advocate and defend our patients’ right to quality healthcare.

While we are encouraged by the government’s recent interest in this important issue after nearly eight months of silence, we are disappointed in their approach.

We have been clear, the OAO is committed to finding a long-term sustainable solution that will ensure Ontario families have access to optometry services. This one-time payment from the government covers less than one quarter of the funding deficit to reach our cost to perform OHIP services in a single year. More importantly, it does not commit to any long-term solution or mechanism to address this crisis in eye care. This omission will continue to have adverse effects on OHIP patients like children and seniors for years to come.

As the most populated province in the country, compared to other provinces with publicly funded optometry services, Ontario is by far the lowest funded. For example, the funding for seniors’ eye exams would have to increase more than 60% to reach the next lowest-funded province, Manitoba, and by more than 125% to reach the next lowest-funded, Québec.

While we understand the government’s request to review optometry operating costs and fee increases, this work could have begun months ago. In fact, in December 2020, the OAO offered the Ministry of Health the opportunity to co-author a study on optometry fees, to which they did not respond. Additionally, the fee data from other provinces is readily and publicly available on the other provincial governments’ websites. It is extremely frustrating for our members to see the government continue to prolong a resolution while our patient’s health care and quality of life remain at risk.

The OAO continues to remain at the negotiating table. Our team has never wavered in our commitment to sit at this table as we recognize the direct impact these discussions have on real people’s lives. Our patients are depending on our tireless advocacy to ensure their children, our seniors and those with existing eye conditions have the care they need to ensure the highest quality of life.” - *Dr. Sheldon Salaba, President, Ontario Association of Optometrists.*