

Stephanie Olewski

To: Sandy Kitchen
Subject: RE: Save Eye Care in Ontario - Correspondence #2

From: Julia Mockler [REDACTED] >

Sent: September 13, 2021 3:42 PM

To: Nelson Santos <nsantos@kingsville.ca>; Gord Queen <gqueen@kingsville.ca>; Kim DeYong <kdeyong@kingsville.ca>; Tony Gaffan <tgaffan@kingsville.ca>; Laura Lucier <llucier@kingsville.ca>; Thomas Neufeld <tneufeld@kingsville.ca>; Larry Patterson <lpatterson@kingsville.ca>

Subject: Save Eye Care in Ontario

Dear Mayor Nelson Santos, Deputy Mayor Gord Queen, Councillor Kim DeYong, Councillor Tony Gaffan, Councillor Laura Lucier, Councillor Thomas Neufeld, and Councillor Larry Patterson,

As a local optometrist, I am writing to request that the Town of Kingsville Council call on the Ontario Government to 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.

The government did not act before September 1st, 2021, and millions of Ontarians are now 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.

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.

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. Currently, Kingsville has 8 Optometrists across 3 practices within the township and all are participating in Job Action meaning a substantial loss of access to eye care in our community.

So far, 15 municipalities and/or mayors in Ontario have passed motions and/or written letters in support of OHIP optometry services. I'm requesting that my 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 me know. My patients and I hope that we can count on your support.

Sincerely,
Dr. Julia Mockler
Optometrist
Kingsville, Born and Raised