

**City Hall - Mitch Panciuk**

169 Front Street  
Belleville, Ontario  
K8N 2Y8

Dear Mayor Mitch Panciuk,

On behalf of local optometrists, who are the primary eye care providers for many of your constituents, we are writing to request that Belleville's Town 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. We are currently the lowest paid optometrists in Canada.

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 \$5.50 increase over three decades! With over four million services performed annually under OHIP, this level of funding is not sustainable. To bring us up to par with the **SECOND LOWEST** province in Canada the current funding would have to go up by almost 70% and almost 120% if we were to meet the average!

As of September 1st, 2021, the government of Ontario has not acted and we as optometrists are without a sustainable plan to ensure the well-being of Ontarians for generations to come. Optometrists have been forced to withdraw our services from OHIP. Now millions of Ontarians have lost 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. (we are simply asking for them to at least cover costs)

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”. There are many more municipalities that are in the process of supporting Optometrists in Ontario.

We are requesting that the municipal council of Belleville, be a leader for its people during this crisis and do the right thing by approving a similar motion. We all want OHIP insured individuals to regain access to the quality eye care they deserve as soon as possible.

Should you have any questions, or would like more information, please let us know. We and our patients hope that we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hiten Negandhi  
Dr. Samit Patel  
Dr. Arif Surani  
Dr. Ravi Panjabi  
Dr. Darlene Hirt  
Dr. Bernie Uhlmann  
Dr. Jeffrey Lam  
Dr. Angela Moore  
Dr. Camilla Poot  
Dr. Maria Coward  
Dr. Bruce Coward  
Dr. Jim Tzeng  
Dr. Cortina Tan  
Dr. Melanie Gysen  
Dr. Rob Locke  
Dr. Sheena Raju  
Dr. Lorraine Moncrieffe  
Dr. Nathalie Renaud  
Dr. Sanyukta Awale  
Dr. Ricky Cheung  
Dr. Pauline Godfrey  
Dr. P. Christmas  
Dr. Joleen McIntyre