



## Lack of Government Support Threatens Access to Eye care in Ontario

### **C.A.R.P. is asking older Ontarians to speak up for eye care before it's too late.**

In 1989, the Ontario government paid thirty-nine- dollars to an optometrist for a single eye exam. Since then, that figure has increased on average seventeen cents a year.

C.A.R.P. has done the math. It doesn't come close to covering the costs incurred by an optometrist in providing an eye exam. Yet the government continues a thirty-year tradition of refusing to formally negotiate.

This ongoing neglect by the government has left Ontario optometrists with no other choice. Starting September 1st, seniors, children, and all

other patients covered by OHIP will no longer be able to access eye care at their local optometrist.

This disruption in the delivery of 4 million annual eye care services can be avoided. The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) says the government simply needs to commit to a binding, formal negotiation process — the same way they do with other health care sectors and ensure that optometrists will no longer be forced to subsidize publicly funded eye care.

**C.A.R.P.’s Chief Policy Officer, Bill VanGorder hosted a recent [webinar](#) with OAO president, Dr. Sheldon Salaba and Waterloo University School of Optometry & Vision Science Director, Dr. Stan Woo.**

***Dr. Salaba urged the 600 attendees to speak up about the issue,***

**“Optometrists in this province...want to continue to provide care to our patients and avoid any interruption in our service. We’re here to ask you to write your MPPs, your local media outlets, and tell them that the government needs to engage with optometry to find a sustainable funding solution.”**

Equitable access to the best available healthcare is a pillar of C.A.R.P.’s advocacy. VanGorder asks, “Why is the Ontario government ignoring this very important service and not reimbursing in a way that can allow optometrists to formally continue the service?”

C.A.R.P. recently conducted an Ontario-wide survey on the matter which garnered over 5,000 responses. Respondents were extremely concerned about losing the eyecare they need.

VanGorder himself notes, “I wouldn’t be able to see today if I hadn’t had an optometrist tell me that I had cataracts forming and do

something about it right away. There's no other professional who is going to detect that until it's too late."

"A greater investment in optometry", Dr. Woo says, "would ultimately save the health system and individuals greater costs down the road."

According to a recent report by Deloitte Access Economics, 1.2 million people in Canada are currently projected to be living with vision loss. Cost of vision loss to economy both directly and indirectly was 33 billion in 2019 and projected to be 56 billion by 2050.

**Please visit [carp.ca/seechange](https://carp.ca/seechange) to join the growing group of C.A.R.P. members and Ontarians calling on the government to save eye care.**