



Jeff Burch M.P.P.
Niagara Centre

September 22, 2021

Hon. Doug Ford, MPP
Premier of Ontario
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

URGENT OPEN LETTER

Hon. Christine Elliott, MPP
Minister of Health
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Elliott:

Many people already dealing with this ongoing pandemic and now having eye care services under OHIP stopped is really the last straw.

The Ontario Association of Optometrists says eye doctors are the lowest paid in the country and that OHIP has underfunded eye exams for decades.

My office has stacks of petitions from area optometrists and their patients demanding your government resolve this crisis in eye care coverage. They're not even asking to make money at it. They are just saying, "Let's negotiate something that covers our costs."

With these vital services withdrawn, patients are not be able to pay for eye exams even if they want to since there is a law that prohibits patients from paying for a service that is covered by OHIP.

Laurel Legault of Welland is appalled this is happening at the expense of her one-year-old son Khatchiar who was stung by a bee. A picture is attached.

She told me in an email: "He was unable to see an eye doctor due to the government refusing to settle with the optometrists. Thankfully, his pediatrician saw him, but he needs to be evaluated by an eye doctor. He cannot tell me if his vision is impaired - he needs an experienced professional to assess him. The optometrists have helped the public to their own detriment. Now there is nothing left - now my baby suffers. How is that right?"

I can truthfully say that optometrists in Niagara would much rather be taking care of their patients than be involved in this job action. However, in its current state, how your government funds eye care is no longer sustainable.

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This pandemic has turned our lives upside down and we really do not need our eye care now put in jeopardy. This is targeting children and seniors.

Please Premier and Minister Elliott, get back to serious discussions with our optometrists. Recall the Legislature and have an emergency debate on this eye care crisis only your government can resolve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Burch', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeff Burch, MPP

Attach.

Copy: Laurel Legault, Welland
Doug DeRabbie, Ontario Association of Optometrists, Government Relations
France Gélinas, MPP Nickel Belt, Official Opposition Health Care Critic