November 18, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier
Minister of Health, Ontario
Hepburn Block 10th Floor 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9
Sent via email: christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Ontario Association of Optometrists
Dr. Sheldon Salaba
20 Adelaide St East
Box 16, Suite 801
Toronto, ON M5T 2T6
Sent via email: oaoinfo@otom.on.ca

Dear Minister Elliott and Dr. Salaba,

As partners in visual health as per the Ontario Public Health Standards, the Board of Health for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU) is writing to express concern over the current lack of vision services for patients under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

As you are aware, as of September 1, 98 per cent of optometrists have discontinued services for the 2.9 million patients covered for eye care under OHIP, including children under 19, people 65 and older and those with certain eye conditions. This is of particular concern given the concurrent suspension of many public health unit run vision screening programs for children across the province due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs aim to detect vision issues amongst senior kindergarten students and refer them to local optometrists for follow-up. Even if public health programs were to be reinstated, with no optometrist services available for referrals, children will continue to be left at risk of undetected vision issues as well as other missed diagnoses.

The Board of Health for the HKPRDHU urges the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) to re-enter discussions with the goal of restoring vision services as soon as possible for vulnerable Ontarians.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Mr. Elmslie
Doug Elmslie
Chair, Board of Health
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit

cc (via email): The Honourable Doug Ford
MPP, Laurie Scott
MPP, David Piccini
Association of Local Public Health Agencies