October 30, 2019

VIA: Email

Hon. Christine Elliot  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3  
christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

RE: Opposition to Co-Payment for Dentures under the New Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

Dear Minister Elliott,

At its meeting on October 18, 2019, the City of Hamilton Board of Health received a report and presentation on the Ontario Senior’s Dental Program. As a result, the Board of Health was very happy to have this new program, but concerned about a possible co-payment for dentures.

Many seniors in Hamilton cannot afford dental care and either pay out of pocket or forgo regular dental care. As a result, many seniors increasingly seek dental care in hospital emergency departments. Seniors living in low-income areas are two times more likely to visit hospitals than those living in high income areas.

Oral health is linked to overall health and is an important health matter for many seniors in the community. As people age, their oral health may become worse due to medications, medical conditions as well as mobility limitations that make good oral hygiene difficult to maintain. In addition, seniors may face barriers to accessing dental care due to cost, limited physical and cognitive abilities and transportation.

In Hamilton there are approximately 10,230 seniors who could be eligible for the new Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP). Local population health data indicates that 47% of all seniors wear dentures, and without regular dental care it could be surmised that the proportion of low-income seniors would be greater than the overall 47%. Dentures are important functional appliances to replace missing teeth. Dentures allow people to speak and chew properly therefore supporting good nutrition, communication, social interaction and self esteem.

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The purpose of the new OSDCP program is to increase access and reduce barriers to care so low-income seniors could be provided with proper dental care and maintain good oral health, without the cost of dental care being a factor.

Given that the cost of dental care has been identified as one of the main barriers to care, imposing a 10% co-payment would compound this barrier and dentures would remain inaccessible for many low-income seniors. This would adversely affect seniors’ overall quality of life and is contrary to the original purpose of the program. Due to the factors listed above, we are opposed to the possibility of a 10% co-payment for the OSDCP.

Sincerely,

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor

CC:
Hon. Donna Skelly, MPP, Flamborough – Glanbrook
Hon. Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Official Opposition, MPP, Hamilton Centre
Hon. Paul Miller, MPP, Hamilton East – Stoney Creek
Hon. Monique Taylor, MPP, Hamilton Mountain
Hon. Sandy Shaw, MPP, Hamilton West – Ancaster, Dundas
Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)
Ontario Boards of Health