

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Community and Health Services
February 11, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services and Medical Officer of Health

2021 Procurement of Services for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

1. Recommendations

1. Council delegate authority to the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to procure interim dental services and to execute related agreements as follows:
 - a) Contracts may only be awarded by the Commissioner up until and including December 31, 2021.
 - b) Time periods covered by the contracts for general dental services will vary, however, no contract shall be longer than three years with an option to renew for up to two years.
 - c) The total cost of services will not exceed the value of funding received from the Ministry of Health to operate the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program.
2. Council delegate authority to the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to procure ongoing specialty dental services (prosthodontics, endodontics, periodontics and oral surgery) and to execute related agreements as follows:
 - a) Time periods covered by the contracts for specialty dental services will not exceed three years with an option to renew for up to two years.
 - b) The total cost of services will not exceed the value of funding received from the Ministry of Health to operate the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program.

2. Summary

This report is prepared to assist Council in carrying out its legislative duties and responsibilities as the board of health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

The Ministry of Health has directed that the Ontario Seniors Dental program must be administered by public health units with salaried providers. As an interim measure until the Region could open its own clinics for the new Ontario Seniors Dental Care program, Council authorized the Commissioner of Community and Health services to enter into service

agreements with dental service providers until December 31, 2020 and for specialty dental services, provided the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) funds all related costs.

Due to delays caused by COVID-19 and late approvals by the Ministry of Health for capital costs, this report seeks authority for the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to continue to enter into interim service agreements with general dental providers and contracts for the ongoing provision of specialty dental services, provided the Ministry funds all related costs. Under Section 3.3 of the Purchasing Bylaw, Council may authorize any method of procurement where to do so would be in the best interest of the Region.

Key Points:

- The Ministry requires public health units to deliver the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program services with salaried dental providers
- Public Health dental clinics were suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the program is providing essential services by monitoring client calls and referring clients with emergency conditions to other public health units who are providing emergency services and have clinical capacity
- Ministry funding approval was received for capital infrastructure upgrades at four of the five locations staff applied for, and clinics may be able to open between June 2021 and October 2021
- The Region's four clinics will be operational for general services before the end of 2021, and specialty services will be procured on an ongoing basis through contracts with private sector providers
- This report recommends contracts for no longer than three years with an option to renew for up to two years for general dental providers to cover service needs in response to demand until York Region Public Health clinics are operational, and to help address backlog in service requests that will exist after the Region's clinics open
- This report recommends the procurement of on-going contracts with specialty dental services (prosthodontics, endodontics, periodontics and oral surgery) will not exceed three years with an option to renew for up to two years. These speciality services will not be provided in York Region Public Health clinics and require referral to private practices
- The program has secured one external provider who is currently treating clients and additional contracts are in the negotiation process, however to cover service needs in response to demand until York Region Public Health clinics are operational, authority is requested to continue to procure interim general and specialty dental services, subject to the costs being fully funded by the Ministry
- These contracts would become part of Financial and Administration Services biannual consolidated non-competitive contract awards and extensions report process, and contracted amounts will not exceed Ministry funding

3. Background

The Ontario Seniors Dental Care program provides access to dental care for low-income residents aged 65 years or older

In April 2019, the Province of Ontario announced funded [dental care program](#) for low income seniors that staff brought forward to York Region's Board of Health in [October 2019](#). To be eligible for the program, residents must:

- Be 65 years and older and do not have access to dental benefits
- Meet the low-income threshold of \$19,300 or less for individuals and \$32,300 or less for couples

In York Region, 23,760 seniors are eligible for the program; 80% of these eligible seniors live in the City of Markham, the City of Vaughan and the City of Richmond Hill. The Ministry estimates 40% of eligible seniors will access the service which equates to 10,400 in York Region.

Ministry requirements for program service delivery include enhancement of existing public health preventive dental clinics. Currently the Region operates public health preventive clinics for the Healthy Smiles Ontario program for low-income children. Preventive services (e.g. dental cleanings and fluoride application) at these clinics are delivered by salaried Regional staff (Registered Dental Hygienists and Certified Dental Assistants) and services requiring a dentist (e.g. x-rays and fillings) are provided by private dental providers who accept children and youth enrolled in the Healthy Smiles Ontario Program.

Clinic enhancements are required at these public health preventive clinics to provide both preventive and restorative (e.g. x-rays and fillings) dental services for seniors by salaried staff (Registered Dental Hygienists, Certified Dental Assistants and Dentists). Speciality services will not be provided in York Region Public Health clinics as these types of services require specialized equipment and practitioners (e.g. when oral surgery and anaesthesiology are required for treatment) requiring referral to private practices through on-going contracted services.

Until Public Health clinic upgrades are complete, contracts with salaried dental providers are required to provide services

Staff have asked the province on several occasions to permit delivery of the program through contracting with private sector dentists. The Ministry is permitting health units to temporarily contract with external providers to ensure public health can provide a minimum level of service until the Public Health dental clinics are built and operational. The use of contracted services is a temporary measure to meet Ministry requirements and will help to cover service needs in response to demand until clinics are operational, address backlog in service requests that will exist after the clinics open, and are not intended to replace internal unionized staffing roles for long term service provision.

In addition to general dental services, contracts with salaried dental service providers need to be procured to provide specialty dental services (e.g., prosthodontics, endodontics, periodontics and oral surgery). These types of services are on an as-needed, referral basis and require specific equipment that will be unavailable at the public health clinics.

Council authorized the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to enter into service agreements with dental service providers until December 31, 2020

In [March 2020](#), Committee of the Whole received the Procurement of Services for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program report and in [April 2020](#) Regional Council received the Procurement of Services for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program memorandum.

Council authorized the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to enter into service agreements with dental service providers until December 31, 2020 provided the Ministry funds all related costs. The length of time for these service agreements was to be dependent upon how long it would take for the Region's clinics to complete capital infrastructure upgrades to meet the needs of the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program in York Region.

York Region plans to have four clinics for the Seniors Dental program in 2021

In August 2019 York Region submitted a required capital funding application to the Ministry for clinic upgrades for existing Public Health clinics in Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Markham, Newmarket, and a new clinic build in Sutton.

In December 2019, Ministry funding approval was received for capital infrastructure upgrades for 17150 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket, however, this project was placed on hold during the COVID-19 emergency lockdown that started in March 2020. In August 2020, additional funding approval was received for 4261 Highway #7 East in the City of Markham, 9060 Jane Street in the City of Vaughan and 20849 Dalton Rd, Town of Georgina.

Clinic enhancement upgrade projects have restarted. Pending completion of upgrades, it is anticipated these clinic locations will be ready to offer services by:

- June 2021: 17150 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket
- September 2021: 20849 Dalton Rd in the Town of Georgina
- December 2021: 4261 Highway #7 East in the City of Markham and 9060 Jane Street in the City of Vaughan

Upgrades to meet COVID-19 infection prevention and control requirements for dental services are being made, including heating, ventilation, and air conditioning and air exchange requirements outlined by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario. An application has been made under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream to complete these heating, ventilation, and air conditioning upgrades. Council approved the funding application on [December 17, 2020](#) for [\\$0.20 million](#).

Capital funding for clinical upgrades at 50 High Tech Road in the City of Richmond Hill was not approved by the Ministry of Health. Staff are exploring alternative funding options for this site with the Ministry. Without upgrades to this clinic, approximately 4,200 appointments per year will not be available, representing about 33% of initial planned capacity for service. This will result in longer waiting lists and require clients to potentially travel longer distances for service.

To support services at these clinics, York Region staff will be hired to provide general dental services at the enhanced public health clinics and the Ministry will cover operating costs. Staffing was approved as part of the 2020 budget deliberations, and hiring will begin in the first half of 2021.

4. Analysis

Public Health clinical dental services are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 emergency response

On March 17, 2020, on the advice of the [Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario](#), and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health suspended all elective clinical dental services for children and youth and the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program clients. Across the province the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario strongly recommended that all non-essential and elective services should be suspended except for emergencies until [May 26, 2020](#), when the Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a directive that allowed a gradual restart of services.

With redeployment of public health dental staff to meet the ongoing needs of the COVID-19 emergency response, York Region Public Health dental clinics for children and youth remain closed. Additionally, school screening services have been suspended and the program is providing essential services by monitoring client calls and referring clients with emergency conditions to private dental providers who accept the [Healthy Smiles Ontario](#) program.

For the seniors program, essential services are being provided by monitoring client calls and referring clients with emergency conditions to appropriate available public health units who are providing emergency services and have clinical capacity, however neighbouring jurisdictions currently have limited capacity to provide these services. Additionally, the program has secured one external general dental provider who is currently treating clients and additional contracts are in the negotiation process.

Demand for program services during COVID-19 has increased client wait lists for services

Cancellation of the program, and limited capacity for referrals to neighbouring public health units has caused hardships. As of October 31, 2020, there were 7,157 York Region seniors enrolled into the program, representing 16% of the province's total enrollment. From January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, there were 6,346 (about 120 per week) seniors who had called the York Region dental phone line to access services or enroll in the program. Of that

number, 499 have been referred to other health units for emergency care and 1,904 have been placed on a waitlist for service.

Interim general dental service contracts continue to be required to support the program until York Region clinics are operational and can accept transfer of care

In June 2020, Public Health initiated procurement processes to secure interim contracts for general and speciality dental services through private dental offices (with salaried staff) throughout the Region through an expression of interest process. This process was unsuccessful in gaining interest which may have been attributed to:

- Potential service providers must meet certain legal and quality assurance requirements, which may add to their administrative duties depending on the service provider's practice
- Reduced appointment capacities due to new COVID-19 infection prevention and control requirements
- Gradual re-opening of offices pending clinic enhancements to meet new COVID-19 infection prevention and control requirement and the backlog created in booking appointments of regular patients after almost three months of shutdown

Efforts to secure contracts with external providers are on-going through non-competitive contract processes. Currently, the program has reached an agreement with one general dental provider and are actively exploring additional service providers.

Continued delegated authority to procure services is required to support the program in 2021

To respond to program development and clinic capital upgrades and funding delays, ongoing redeployment of Public Health staff, and the continued significant growing demand for service, staff propose the continued procurement of contracts for general dental services as an interim measure until the Region's clinics are operational.

Staff anticipate an additional three to five interim general dental service contracts will be required, and approximately eight interim long-term specialty service contracts will be required to respond to the need for specialized treatment outside of the scope of general dental services. These services will be made available, through referrals, at selected private dental offices (with salaried staff).

Staff recommend that Council continue to give authority to staff to procure dental services on an interim basis as follows:

- For general dental services
 - The total cost of services will not exceed the value of funding received from the Ministry to operate the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

- Contracts may only be awarded by the Commissioner up until and including December 31, 2021
- Time periods covered by the contracts for general dental services will vary depending upon the dates when the Region's clinics are operational, subject to that no contract shall be longer than three years with an option to renew for up to two years
- Section of Specialty Dental Services
 - The total cost of services will not exceed the value of funding received from the Ministry to operate the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

Initial time periods for speciality dental services will be will not exceed three years with an option to renew for up to two years to ensure the ability of the program to secure providers as it is anticipating that securing shorter term contracts for these types of services will be challenging. If deemed satisfactory for continuation, these contracts would become part of the Financial and Administration Services biannual consolidated non-competitive contract awards and extensions report process.

5. Financial

The Ministry has approved \$1,021,400 to create four Regional clinics. Staff requested funding for a fifth clinic in Richmond Hill, which has not been approved. The Ministry has approved an annual funding allocation of \$3,961,700 to operate the Ontario Seniors Dental Care program, which will cover all operating costs.

Operating, purchase of service and capital related costs will be managed within the approved funding allocations from the Ministry, with no tax levy impact.

6. Local Impact

Implementation of interim dental services for the Seniors Dental program will make services available to eligible clients throughout the Region.

7. Conclusion

Staff is seeking Council delegation of authority to the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to procure interim and specialty dental services. These services are mandated under the Ministry's *Oral Health Protocol, 2019* and the Public Health Funding and Accountability Agreements of January 1, 2019.

For more information on this report, please contact Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74012. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

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Approved for Submission:

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