



Office of the Commissioner
Community and Health Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Board of Health

From: Dr. Karim Kurji
Medical Officer of Health

Date: September 25, 2019

Re: Implementation of the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

This memo provides information about implementation of the new Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) for low income seniors and steps York Region Public Health is taking to initiate the service beginning November 1, 2019.

On April 11, 2019, the Province of Ontario announced a \$90 million investment in a publicly-funded dental care for low-income seniors. York Region was allocated \$3,961,700 in additional annual operating base funding to support the OSDCP starting this year, however, Ministry of Health requirements for how the program must be delivered meant it could not be operational until mid to late 2020. Requirements contributing to the delay include having to build new dental operatories in Public Health offices, and hiring staff (including dentists).

On September 13, 2019, the Ministry of Health requested all public health units provide a minimum level of service beginning November 1, 2019; called a “soft launch”. To achieve this, the Ministry relaxed its requirements and will now permit contracting with a temporary salaried service.

Staff will use authority delegated to the Commissioner of Community and Health Services for a \$150,000 direct purchase of service to quickly start the service. Over the next couple of months, staff will develop and implement a strategy to continue to provide contracted salaried services until the full, permanent program is in place.

Starting November 1, 2019, eligible low income seniors may access basic dental health services at no cost

York Region Public Health will offer limited oral health services to eligible seniors starting November 1, 2019 that include:

- Assistance with program enrolment
- Oral hygiene instruction (brushing, flossing, denture care)
- Nutrition counselling related to oral health
- Denture cleaning
- Fluoride varnish application (pending a dental assessment by the dental hygienist)
- Assistance with referral to other public health units as needed

In addition, contracting of salaried temporary services may allow for the expansion of oral health services including treatment services such as examinations, cleanings, repair of broken teeth and cavities. The extent of these services will be explored during our contract negotiations.

The types of services available from each public health unit will vary across the Province with a soft launch due the varying state of readiness from health unit to health unit. As required, clients of the program will be referred to neighbouring health units which currently have the infrastructure to provide the full range of services. It is anticipated there will be wait lists for services across all jurisdictions with the soft launch.

When the York Region OSDC program is fully implemented later next year, additional services will be available, including examinations/assessments, preventive and restorative services, radiographs, and oral surgery. Services delivered will be at no cost to eligible seniors. The only exception might be dentures for which the Ministry is considering a 10% co-payment.

In York Region 23,760 seniors may be eligible for the new OSDCP

The program is for Ontario residents 65 years and older, who do not have access to dental benefits (e.g., private insurance or other government programs), and who meet the low-income threshold of \$19,300 or less for individuals, and \$32,300 or less for couples. In 2016, there were 23,760 seniors with incomes below the income thresholds for the new program. Of these, 13,920 lived alone, 170 were lone parents and 9,670 were couple families where at least one member was 65 years or older. Distribution by local municipality is shown below:

Table 1
Eligible Seniors by Local Municipality

Local Municipality	Number of Seniors	Proportion of Seniors
Aurora	710	3.0%
East Gwillimbury	220	0.9%
Georgina	470	2.0%

Local Municipality	Number of Seniors	Proportion of Seniors
King	250	1.1%
Markham	9,520	40.1%
Newmarket	1,060	4.5%
Richmond Hill	5,370	22.6%
Vaughan	5,490	23.1%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	670	2.8%
York Region	23,760	100%

Source: Income data from 2016 taxfiler

Staff are quickly taking steps to publicize the soft launch and complete all Ministry requirements

A communication plan is under development to provide York Region residents with guidance on:

- Eligibility requirements
- Process for application completion
- How and where to access service
- Types of services provided by York Region Public Health

Attached to this memo is one of the first communication tools, an overview of the program.

There are still a number of outstanding items required from the Ministry to execute a soft launch, which will be completed within the next few weeks:

- Finalized Ontario Public Health Standards Oral Health Protocol
- Enrolment forms, access to forms and detailed processes of enrollment
- Finalized schedule of services to be offered with full implementation
- Referral processes for those clients who require linkages to other Public Health Units
- Launch of updated version of the Oral Health Information Support System, which is the Ministry database used by public health units to support oral health screening and surveillance. The updated version will be used for collecting and reporting client treatment data.

York Region's permanent OSDCP program will provide the full range of services, and should be operational by mid to late 2020

The Ministry requires public health units to deliver OSDCP services with salaried dental providers, located in Public Health Units, Community Health Centres and Aboriginal Health Access Centres. There is no existing dental clinic infrastructure in place in the York Region Vaughan Community Health Centre and York Region does not have an Aboriginal Health Access Centre. York Region Public Health clinics currently exist and provide preventive services for children and youth. To deliver the services required under the OSDCP, clinic infrastructure upgrades are required such as lining walls in lead to do x-rays.

The Region plans to build upon existing infrastructure at three locations, and is looking at capital needs for two additional locations.

Infrastructure upgrades for existing public health dental clinics are planned at:

- 4261 Hwy #7, Markham (leased by York Region)
- 50 High Tech Road, Richmond Hill (leased by York Region)
- 9060 Jane St, Vaughan (owned by York Region)

Staff have determined infrastructure requirements for future public health dental clinics:

- 17150 Yonge Street, Newmarket, (owned by York Region)
- 20849 Dalton Road, Sutton, "The Link", Sutton, Town of Georgina (to be leased by York Region)

An application was made August 6, 2019 to the Ministry for capital funding to enhance current public health dental clinics and for the two future locations. There has been no response to date.

The Ministry requires Public Health to provide the program using salaried staff and providers. The Community and Health Services 2020 budget submission will include a request for 27.2 FTEs (22.2 dental professionals, three managers and two administrative staff). The \$3,961,700 in provincial funding allocated is estimated to be sufficient to cover the costs of staff and clinic operations. It is uncertain if the program will continue to be 100% provincially funded.

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Dr. Karim Kurji
Medical Officer of Health

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment (1)
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