

Minister of Health Calls on Ontario Association of Optometrists to Continue Negotiations

August 17, 2021

TORONTO — Today, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, issued the following statement regarding the upcoming job action by the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO):

“Since day one, our government has been hard at work ensuring that all patients have access to the care they need, when they need it. To that end, the Ministry of Health has held meaningful discussions with the OAO to support optometrists in delivering high-quality care, both now and into the future.

While we had hoped that these discussions would lead to a positive outcome, we are disappointed in the OAO’s approach to this process, particularly their continued threat to withdraw services that many vulnerable Ontarians rely on.

Both parties agree that optometrists have been long neglected by previous governments. That is why our government intends to provide an immediate one-time payment of \$39 million to the approximately 2,500 optometrists practicing in Ontario for retroactive increases over the past decade. At the same time, we have asked for bilateral discussions, with the continued support of a mediator, to review optometry operating costs and future fee increases.

The \$39 million payment represents similar increases applied to other health care professionals, including physicians, since the OAO’s last agreement expired in 2011. It is our sincere hope that this one-time payment will preserve access to care that patients, in particular seniors, rely on as these discussions continue.

Our government has always made clear that it is willing to sit down and talk to the OAO. We are ready to continue talking. We urge the OAO to commit to working with us to reach an agreement to ensure Ontarians can continue to access the care they need and deserve.”