
REPORT TITLE: Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Update

FROM: Cathy Granger, Acting Commissioner of Health Services
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Officer of Health

RECOMMENDATION

That the Region of Peel Public Health move forward with the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program as outlined in the report from the Commissioner of Health Services and the Interim Medical Officer of Health, titled “Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Update”.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On November 20, 2019, the new Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program for low-income seniors was launched. The program provides comprehensive dental care to eligible low-income seniors to help reduce unnecessary trips to the hospital, prevent chronic disease and increase quality of life for seniors.
 - In June 2019, the province approved \$3,912,800 in annual operational funding to support this 100 per cent provincially funded dental program for low-income seniors.
 - Dental treatment services are provided to eligible seniors through three locations at two Community Health Centres in the Region of Peel: Health n’ Smiles Dental Clinic in Brampton and Four Corners Health Centre in Malton (WellFort Community Health Services) and East Mississauga Community Health Centre.
 - Since late March 2020, all regular dental services have been suspended due to the COVID-19 response. Emergency dental services continue to be provided to eligible seniors through Community Health Centres. When Community Health Centres are able to resume regular dental care services, public health staff will be required to meet ministry requirements and program administration needs.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

a) New Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

On November 20, 2019, the provincial government launched the first stage of the new Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (‘Provincial program’) through existing dental infrastructure. It is currently unknown how many seniors are enrolled in the program provincially or locally. The Ministry of Health (‘Ministry’) estimates that 6,398 eligible seniors in Peel will access services through the Provincial program annually. However, Peel Public Health anticipates the demand for the Provincial program will be greater than Ministry estimates at approximately 16,391 eligible seniors accessing services in Peel.

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As of January 31, 2020, a total of 255 seniors have received services since the program started.

Under the Provincial program, services can only be accessed through clinics operated by public health units, Community Health Centres or Aboriginal Health Access Centres. Services cannot be accessed through private dental offices. In the Region of Peel, dental treatment services are currently being provided to eligible seniors through three sites: Health n' Smiles Dental Clinic in Brampton and Four Corners Health Centre in Malton (WellFort Community Health Services) and East Mississauga Community Health Centre.

Seniors are eligible for the Provincial program if they:

- Are 65 years or older;
- Are a resident of Ontario;
- Have an annual income of \$19,300 or less for a single person or a combined income of \$32,300 or less for a couple; and,
- Have no access to other dental benefits.

b) Transitioning out of the Region of Peel Seniors' Dental Program

On July 15, 2019, Peel Public Health stopped accepting applications to the Region of Peel Seniors' Dental Program ('Regional program') waitlist and created a contact list to refer seniors to the Provincial program. Peel Public Health is committed to providing a seamless transition for seniors. As of February 26, 2020, staff completed the transition plan to navigate seniors who are currently enrolled in the Regional program or on the waitlist to access care. There are a small number of clients receiving ongoing treatment through the Regional Program. Most of this treatment will be completed and paid for by the end of 2020, with only a few claims carrying forward into 2021. Refer to the Council report titled "Transitioning to the New Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program," September 26, 2019 Regional Council meeting, for more information.

c) Approved Capital Funding Projects

On December 9, 2019, Peel Public Health received approval for up to \$1,143,000 in one-time funding to support two requested capital projects for the Provincial program. Funding was approved to purchase one mobile dental clinic and expand the existing Health n' Smiles dental clinic by adding two operatories. Staff are working through the procurement process for the dental bus and the Health n' Smiles operatory expansion project will begin construction shortly. See January 23, 2020 council report "Update on the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Capital Funding Requests" for more information.

2. Resources Needed to Support Program Implementation

a) Program Requirements

The Ministry of Health, through the *Ontario Public Health Standards - Oral Health Protocol, 2019* requires that all Boards of Health:

- i.) Deliver treatment services directly or through participating Community Health Centres or Aboriginal Health Access Centres;

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- ii.) Collect and analyze treatment data for clients; and,
- iii.) Provide oral health navigation and health promotion by supporting awareness of, access to, and utilization of the Provincial program.

b) Resources

Dedicated public health staff are required to support ministry mandated program administration, oral health navigation, health promotion and data collection and analysis functions for the program. Program administration functions related to the provision of service by Community Health Centres also require dedicated public health staff.

Since late March 2020, all regular dental services provided by Community Health Centres have been suspended due to the COVID-19 response. Emergency dental services continue to be provided to eligible seniors. When Community Health Centres are able to resume regular dental care services, public health staff will be required to meet ministry requirements and program administration needs.

Navigation and health promotion activities requiring staffing include:

- Outreach and support to Peel Region seniors to apply for and obtain services at engaged community health centres; and,
- Supporting seniors and their families to improve their oral health knowledge through targeted outreach to priority populations and/or communities.

Program administration functions include:

- Service system manager funding and accountability responsibilities for dental service delivery partners, funding and accountability responsibilities related to ministry reporting, program planning, and dental bus procurement.

3. Provincial Advocacy

Provincial advocacy initiatives for sufficient funding to meet the oral health needs of low-income seniors in Peel (Resolution 2020-43) have yet to occur due the redeployment of program staff to support Public Health's ongoing COVID-19 response. However, staff continue to keep the Ministry apprised of the demand for services in Peel.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Peel Public Health has been approved for up to \$3,912,800 in annual operational funding from the Ministry of Health for the 100 per cent provincially funded Ontario Seniors Dental Program.

The creation of 10.0 full time equivalent (FTE) regular staff positions at an annual cost of \$1,067,121 is needed to provide ministry mandated program administration, navigation, health promotion and data collection and analysis functions for the program. This staffing cost will be fully covered through the approved provincial funding.

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The direct service functions to seniors including dental care services and program navigation supports represents 81 per cent (\$3,182,933) and the administrative functions represent 19 per cent (\$729,867) of the total ministry approved funding envelope of \$3,912,800.

CONCLUSION

The Provincial program was launched on November 20, 2019, at which time low-income seniors in Peel began receiving dental care services. Regional Council's endorsement to move forward with the provincial program is needed to meet ministry mandated requirements and support Region of Peel low-income seniors to access dental care. With significant demand expected in Peel and surrounding area, staff will continue to advocate to the Ministry of Health for additional funding to improve access to dental care by low-income seniors.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Paul Sharma, Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Ext. 2013, Paul.Sharma@peelregion.ca.

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Director, Medical Officer of Health, Financial Support Unit and Legal Services.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer