
REPORT TITLE: Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Growth and Implementation in Peel

FROM: Nancy Polsinelli, RD HBS Sc MPA, Commissioner of Health Services
Gayane Hovhannisyan, MD, MPH, PhD, FRCPC, Acting Medical Officer of Health

RECOMMENDATION

That, to maintain services in the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program until December 31, 2024, funding from the Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve of up to \$3,887,000 be approved, as external funding has not been received from the Ontario Ministry of Health.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2019, the Ontario Ministry of Health ('Ministry') launched the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) to provide comprehensive routine dental services to eligible low-income seniors aged 65 years and older.
- OSDCP enrollment continues to increase annually due to aging population, immigration, and changes to program eligibility thresholds. Approximately 19,500 seniors are enrolled, with 8,000 on a waitlist for routine care.
- Through Ministry capital funding, Peel Public Health is expanding dental infrastructure (i.e., fixed and mobile clinics) to meet high demand for OSDCP services.
- Public Health requested an operational funding increase from the Ministry that has not yet been approved. If the funding is not received by the end of 2024, Public Health will require funding from the Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve to fund the additional costs.
- Public Health will be unable to maintain current service delivery levels and unable to operate the new clinics and dental bus within the current funding allocation.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

In 2019, the Ontario Ministry of Health ('Ministry') launched the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) to provide comprehensive routine dental services to eligible low-income seniors aged 65 years and older.

In 2019, the Ministry underestimated Peel's uptake to be 7,000 clients and allocated funding based on this underestimate. Public Health data shows that demand was far greater. OSDCP enrollment continues to increase annually due to an aging population, immigration, and changes to program eligibility thresholds. Public Health estimates more than 48,000 seniors are eligible for the OSDCP in Peel. Approximately 19,500 seniors are enrolled in Peel, with approximately 8,000 of those seniors on the waitlist to be assigned to a dental clinic.

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As outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards, Boards of Health must implement the OSDCP in accordance with the *Oral Health Protocol, 2021*. Boards of Health are required to assist eligible seniors with enrolling in the OSDCP and accessing services, including establishing a dental home for ongoing care under the program.

2. Current Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Service Delivery in Peel

a) Public Health's Role

Public Health oversees program funding and supports program navigation and service delivery for every OSDCP client in Peel, throughout the duration of enrollment in the program.

Public Health:

- Navigates all OSDCP related inquiries.
- Triage and assigns each client a dental home offered through Community Health Centres (CHCs) and community dental providers.
- Administers funding and oversees program related expenditures (e.g., treatment claims).
- Oversees capital projects for program expansion.

b) Service Delivery Update

In September 2023, more than 10,000 seniors were waiting for routine OSDCP services in Peel. The Ministry requested Public Health to reduce the number of clients waiting for OSDCP services.

In response, Public Health changed the service delivery model to address the high demand for OSDCP services in Peel by increasing funds to the CHCs and partnering with a small number of community dental providers. This helped reduce the waitlist by approximately 2,000 people, connecting more seniors to routine OSDCP services in Peel, many of whom had been waiting for years.

Currently, there are approximately 8,000 seniors waiting for routine OSDCP services in Peel. While waiting for routine care, seniors with an urgent need can receive services.

Public Health has not experienced a reduction in demand for OSDCP service delivery since the Canadian Dental Care Plan was implemented.

c) Current Program Implementation

In Peel, OSDCP services (routine and urgent) are currently provided to eligible seniors through:

- 3 CHC clinics operated by:
 - LAMP CHC (East Mississauga CHC)
 - WellFort Community Health Services (Health n' Smiles Dental Clinic and Four Corners Health Centre)
- 10 community dental providers
- 4 community denturists

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d) Updated Income Eligibility Thresholds

On August 1, 2024, the Ministry increased the income eligibility thresholds for the OSDCP. See Table 1 below. As a result, we expect the number of seniors eligible for the OSDCP in Peel to also increase.

Table 1: OSDCP Income Eligibility Thresholds

Marital Status	Previous Income Eligibility Thresholds	Updated Income Eligibility Thresholds (as of August 1, 2024)
Single Senior	\$22,200	\$25,000
Senior Couple	\$37,100	\$41,500

3. Update on Capital Projects

In 2019, Public Health applied to the Ministry for a total of \$5,577,000 to fund seven capital projects (for further information, refer to the October 24, 2019, report titled “Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program: Capital Funding Requests” (Resolution 2019-951)).

Between 2019 and 2022, the Ministry approved capital funding for six projects to expand existing, and build new, dental infrastructure for OSDCP services in Peel (for further information, refer to the April 27, 2023, report titled “Seniors Oral Health – Public Health Program and Service Update”).

Construction of five of the six projects has been completed and it is anticipated that construction of the final project, the mobile dental clinic, will be completed by March 2025. OSDCP service delivery will begin in each new clinic pending approved operational funding from the Ministry.

It is expected that the expansion of dental infrastructure (e.g., fixed and mobile dental clinics) will result in an approximate 150% increase in the number of new clients connected to OSDCP services in Peel each year.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Public Health’s request for a funding increase for 2024 has not yet been approved by the Ministry. As Public Health was anticipating receiving this funding, it is trending to be overspent in 2024. Public Health submitted annual budget to the Ministry in the spring and an adjusted forecast to the Ministry in September 2024 and awaits the approval of one-time funding for 2024 for the requested increase. If the funding is not received by the end of 2024, Public Health will require funding from reserves for the additional costs.

If the Ministry maintains the current annual funding in 2025 Public Health will experience significant impacts to service delivery. Current OSDCP service levels will not be maintained, and we will not be able to open the new clinics (i.e., fixed clinics and mobile dental clinic). This will prevent Public Health from keeping pace with Peel’s growth, high demand for the program and ensuring clients receive services in a timely manner.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The OSDCP is a 100 per cent provincially funded program. In 2024, Peel received \$6,518,100 in annual base funding from the Ministry. Public Health requested \$3,887,000 in additional funding for 2024 to address the waitlist and increased OSDCP service delivery needs in Peel (i.e., increase program eligibility, expansion of new clinics). Staff are currently awaiting and expect to receive approval by the Ministry of funding for 2024. If the funding is not received, Public Health will require funding up to \$3,887,000 from the Tax Rate Stabilization reserve to fund the additional costs.

For 2025, Public Health will deliver services within its current funding allocation of \$6,518,000. Without a funding increase being confirmed by the Ministry, this will result in significant impacts to service delivery (e.g. not opening the new clinics, nor address the waitlist at current capacity).

Capital funds for the new clinics was received by Public Health for the fiscal period up to March 31, 2024. This only covers part of the capital cost of the new clinics as the clinics were to be finished after this period as the Ministry was made aware. Public Health is waiting for formal funding confirmation for the remainder of the capital funds required to finish the clinics. This information has been provided to the Ministry and totals \$2.7M for the three clinics. The Ministry has indicated that this approval will come between now and March 31, 2025. If capital funding provided by the Ministry changes from what is anticipated, Public Health will report back to Council with alternatives.

CONCLUSION

There continues to be high demand for OSDCP services in Peel. Public Health anticipated and is awaiting additional funding to support the OSDCP demand in Peel. Public Health improved access to the OSDCP through service delivery model changes and completed the Ministry of Health funded dental infrastructure (i.e., fixed and mobile clinics) to serve a greater number of clients. In March 2024, Public Health requested a funding increase that has not yet been approved by the Ministry and is trending to be overspent for 2024. Without the Ministry's approval of the requested funding, and additional ongoing funding, Public Health will be unable to maintain existing service levels, and unable to provide expanded services from the new clinics.



Nancy Polsinelli, RD HBS Sc MPA, Commissioner of Health Services

Authored By: Jillian Herring, Health Promoter