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# Local optometrists say "OHIP is broken for eye care"

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**T**HE cost of eye exams continues to rise and OHIP continues to ignore the plight of optometrists caught in this never ending upward trend.

The Maple Leaf recently spoke with Dr. Jeff Clapp of Clapp Optometric in Port Dover, about the state of all things to do with optometry in Ontario. Drs. Jeff and Jennie Clapp, who have had their office in Port Dover since 1998, feel that "OHIP is broken for eye care."

"It's been over 30 years since we have seen a significant increase in funding for eye exams through OHIP," Dr. Clapp reports.

"It costs us around \$100.00 to provide an eye exam and we currently subsidize over half." That is because the Ontario government (and this crosses party lines, as the issue has been going on over a long period of time) has not given eye care the attention it deserves. It's hard to imagine any other area of health care receiving so little government support.

"We are providing better service with state of the art practices and technology," says Dr.

Clapp, but this is a small group of health care professionals (only approximately 2,600 in Ontario) and hence, easier to ignore, he says. Although The Ontario

Jeff Clapp of Clapp Optometric outside his Main Street professional building in Port Dover

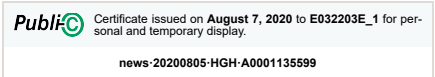
Association of Optometrists has been negotiating in good faith, they have been without a contract since 2011. It's a situation that needs a remedy.

Technology has given optom-etrists great access to things such as OCT technology, which is like a CT scan of the back of the eye. The machines providing such invaluable data are extremely expensive and require specialized (read expensive) maintenance and calibration on a regular basis.

According to Dr. Matt Craig of Norfolk Family Eye Care, "OHIP rates have only gone up 18 to 20% between 1990 and 2020, but the cost of providing the exams has increased by as much as 82%. Funding needs to be increased at a fair rate over time to keep up with the costs of running a practice and providing excellent patient care. The voice of optometry in Ontario is relatively small when it comes to negotiating with the government. Our hope is to educate the public and get them involved in making our voice louder and stronger in dealing with the government for funding".

Both optometrists encourage people to visit [saveeyecare.cato](http://saveeyecare.cato) learn more and sign a petition found on that site, in support of fair funding of eye care in On-

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tario.

With the increasing costs of technology as well as overhead, optometrists can now add on additional restrictions due to the pandemic.

Optometrist's regulatory body, the College of Optometrists of Ontario, works with the government to provide recommendations on how to operate during these times of physical distancing, and that has resulted in a decrease of up to 50 per cent in the number of patients that can be seen. Although volume is down, costs are not, with additional costs for PPE (personal protective equipment) and cleaning all aspects of the eye exam process. Optometrists cannot charge for supplying face masks to patients who come to appointments without one.

The good news is that an eye exam every other year is sufficient for most people between the ages of 20 and 65, unless there are underlying issues.

However, "The College of Optometrists of Ontario estimates that one in three Ontarians will have an eye threatening condition by age of 65," adds Dr. Craig. With the aging population, eye exams are more important than ever.

The Ontario Association of Optometrists is hoping to reach an agreement with the current government so that their members can reach the break-even point on eye exams.

"We are making some noise. The government states that in the last five years, optometrists have charged OHIP 15% more. That means we are seeing more OHIP patients due to our aging population, but we are still losing money with every one of those eye exams," explains

Dr. Clapp.

For more information visit The College of Optometrists of Ontario at [www.collegeoptom.on.ca](http://www.collegeoptom.on.ca)