

## Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Update

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**To:** Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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## Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Board of Health:

1. Receive this report for information.

## Key Points

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- Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) was announced in April 2019 with a phased-in approach.
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) received \$404,500 in capital funding to implement the program.
- WDGPH completed all capital improvements based on funding received.
- WDGPH is working with the Ministry of Health (the “Ministry”) to access funding to increase dental reprocessing capacity.
- OSDCP is working with community partners to support seniors with dental needs while WDGPH responds to the pandemic.

# Discussion

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## Background

In April 2019, the Government of Ontario announced that it would be investing \$90 million annually to implement a dental care program for low-income older adults.<sup>1</sup> WDGPH is the lead agency for delivery of the OSDCP within the health unit geography, and the Ministry is responsible for program enrollment. Enrollment has begun across the province for this program.

Seniors are eligible to receive services under the OSDCP if they:

- Are 65 years of age or older;
- Are residents of Ontario;
- Meet Ministry-specified income eligibility thresholds (less than \$19,300 after tax for single seniors or less than \$32,300 combined after tax for senior couples); and
- Have no access to any private or public dental benefits (including through the Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works).

The OSDCP will be responsible for delivering a 'basket' of dental care services based on a schedule developed by the Ministry which includes:

- Examinations/assessments;
- Preventive services including polishing, fluoride, sealants and scaling;
- Restorative services such as temporary fillings, permanent fillings and crowns;
- Radiographs;
- Oral surgery to remove teeth or abnormal tissue;
- Anesthesia;
- Endodontic services (e.g. root canals) to treat oral infections and pain;
- Periodontal services to treat gum disease and other conditions; and
- Prosthodontic services, including manufacture and fitting of dentures, with a 10% client copayment.

WDGPH began planning and preparing for the OSDCP shortly after the announcement, including the submission of a capital funding application to support the delivery of this program. WDGPH received \$404,500 funding based on this application.

## Capital Funds

WDGPH's capital funding request was for the following three areas: upgrades to equipment and facilities, in both the Guelph and Orangeville locations, and upgrades in equipment and facilities in the reprocessing location at the Guelph Office (Table 1). WDGPH did not receive any additional funds for expanding the reprocessing capacity.

**Table 1**

Capital Project	Furniture/ Equipment	Construction/ Renovation	Total Received	Funding Approved	Status of Upgrade
Orangeville Dental Clinic Expansion	(covered by operating dollars)	\$69,069	\$69,200	Yes	All physical upgrades have occurred in the Orangeville office and all equipment has been installed except for the x-ray machine which will occur once a dentist is hired.
Guelph Dental Clinic Expansion	\$313,115	\$22,159	\$335,300	Yes	All physical upgrades have occurred in the Guelph office and all equipment and furniture has been installed. The HVAC adjustments are slated to be complete in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of November.
Centralized Reprocessing Capacity	\$224,674	\$11,100	\$0	No	WDGPH is working with the Ministry of Health to obtain or secure funding for this project.
<b>Total</b>	\$313,115	\$91,228	\$404,500	n/a	All funds of the capital grant application have been utilized.

## Program Delivery

Phase One of the program began in late 2019, with seniors applying to the Ministry for the program. Individuals who were accepted were able to seek care in the community by oral health practitioners who were willing to deliver the services based on the Ministry fee schedule for OSDCP.

Phase Two of the delivery of the OSDCP was scheduled to occur in the first quarter of 2020. This included expanded programming and services to occur in the Orangeville and Guelph offices with a dentist onsite. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared and, as a result, most programs and services within WDGPH were suspended, including the OSDCP. To date, all onsite OSDCP services continue to be suspended due to the pandemic.

The establishment of community partnerships has allowed WDGPH to continue to offer the basic dental services from Phase One, to seniors in the community, throughout the pandemic response. The dental team is working to establish onsite programs that can run once the pandemic response declines.

## Conclusion

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All capital upgrades have been completed based on the original capital funding application approval. Funds not received from the original application (reprocessing room and equipment) are under discussion between WDGPH and the Ministry. WDGPH's physical structure is prepared for the program to commence.

WDGPH staff are in the process of recruiting appropriate dental staff to deliver the program onsite once Agency needs related to the pandemic decrease. In the interim, seniors can access services in the community through WDGPH community partnerships.

## Ontario Public Health Standard

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### Chronic Disease Prevention and Wellbeing

The board of health shall develop and implement a program of public health interventions using a comprehensive health promotion approach that addresses chronic disease risk and protective factors to reduce the burden of illness from chronic diseases in the health unit population.

## 2020 WDGPH Strategic Direction(s)

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**Service Delivery:** We will provide our programs and services in a flexible, modern and accessible manner, and will ensure they reflect the immediate needs of our clients and our role in the broader sector.

**System Transformation:** We will equip the agency for change in all aspects of our work so that we are ready for transformational system change when the time comes.

**Knowledge Transfer:** We will ensure that our decision-making and policy development efforts are informed by meaningful health data at all times.

## Health Equity

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Oral health is an important contributor to overall physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Older adults and low-income individuals are at particular risk of poor oral health and face greater barriers to accessing appropriate and necessary dental care in Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph.

The OSDCP is a program that meets the oral health needs of low-income older adults. Dental care will be provided to eligible seniors without regard to insurance coverage or ability to pay. This program is intended to address oral health problems in a preventive (upstream) manner wherever possible to improve population health and reduce burden on the acute health care system.

## References

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1. Ontario. Ministry of Finance. 2019 Ontario Budget: Protecting What Matters Most. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2019.

## Appendices

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None.