From: clerk@arran-elderslie.ca
To: Julie Reid
Subject: FW: News Release: MPP Walker announces expansion of access to Dental Care and Affordable Prescription Drugs for vulnerable seniors
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Christine Fraser-McDonald
Acting CAO/Clerk
Municipality of Arran-Elderslie
1925 Bruce Road 10
P.O. Box 70
Chesley, ON N0G 1L0
Ph: 519.270.4922
clerk@arran-elderslie.ca
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From: Walker, Bill <bill.walker@pc.ola.org>
Sent: May 11, 2021 3:05 PM
To: Fell, Chris <chris.fell@pc.ola.org>
Subject: News Release: MPP Walker announces expansion of access to Dental Care and Affordable Prescription Drugs for vulnerable seniors

For Immediate Release
May 11, 2021

MPP Walker announces expansion of access to Dental Care and Affordable Prescription Drugs for vulnerable seniors

OWEN SOUND - The Ontario government is updating the income eligibility thresholds for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program and the Seniors Co-Payment Program to allow more of Ontario's most vulnerable seniors to have access to dental care and affordable prescription medications.

"Our government continues to support Ontario's seniors by ensuring they have access to the quality dental care and the prescription medications they need," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Expanding access to these programs to even more low-income seniors builds on our government's ongoing efforts to protect hospital capacity and will help improve the quality of life and well-being of low-

income seniors."

In 2019, the Ontario government launched the Ontario Seniors Dental Care program to provide free routine dental care for eligible low-income seniors across the province. The Seniors Co-Payment Program enables low-income seniors to access the medication they need with no annual deductible and a reduced co-payment for each prescription.

"This is great news for seniors in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I'm happy to see the eligibility thresholds for these two programs increasing to ensure even more low-income seniors have access to free routine dental care and affordable prescriptions," said Walker.

Starting August 1st, 2021, eligibility thresholds for both programs will be updated to reflect cost of living increases in Ontario and align with income support programs for seniors. Income thresholds will be updated for single Ontarians aged 65 and over, from $19,300 to $22,200, and for couples with a combined annual income, from $32,300 to $37,100. This will allow approximately 7,000 more seniors to access the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program and 17,000 more seniors to access the Seniors Co-Payment Program in 2021-2022.

By ensuring seniors can access effective dental care and continue to afford the medications they need, the Ontario Seniors Dental Care and Seniors Co-Payment programs help to reduce unnecessary trips to the hospital and improve seniors' quality of life. This further supports hospital capacity as Ontario continues to fight the third wave of COVID-19 and is a key component of the government's plan to end hallway health care.

For the Seniors Co-Payment Program, seniors who are eligible under the new income thresholds are encouraged to apply now in advance of the start of the upcoming benefit year on August 1st, 2021. Applying early will help ensure eligible seniors receive the reduction in their drug deductible and co-payment on time to minimize the chance of out of pocket expenses. Once an application has been submitted, eligibility will be assessed to confirm enrollment for the year.

"We know that good oral health is linked to not only better physical health, but also better overall mental health," said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. "These programs help provide seniors with the dignity they deserve and help to improve their quality of life."

Quick Facts

- For the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program, eligible seniors can apply at any time online, downloading and printing the application form or by picking one up at their local public health unit. The form can be submitted online or by mail. For their application to be assessed under the new income thresholds, seniors who are eligible under the new income thresholds for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program can apply beginning July 1st, 2021.
- Since the launch of the Seniors Dental Care Program in 2019, over 50,000 Ontarians have enrolled in the program.
- For the Seniors Co-Payment Program, seniors who are eligible under the new income thresholds can apply now by completing the application that can be found online or request an application over the phone toll free at 1-888-405-0405 or 416-503-4586.
- On the first day of the month after an Ontarian turns 65 years old, they are automatically enrolled in the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program, which covers most of the costs of more than 5,000 prescription drug products. Seniors pay the first $100 of their prescription drug costs each year (the deductible) and up to $6.11 for every prescription (the co-payment).

The Seniors Co-Payment Program, under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program (ODB), allows eligible seniors that are enrolled in the program to pay no annual deductible for their drugs and a reduced co-payment of $2 for each prescription, improving access to essential drugs that they may not otherwise be able to afford.

Additional Resources

- Learn more about Dental Care for Low-Income Seniors at Ontario.ca/SeniorsDental
- Get Coverage for Prescription Drugs
- Ontario Expanding Seniors Dental Care Program
- Ontario Launches Free Routine Dental Care for Low-Income Seniors
- Visit Ontario's website to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.

For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOline at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)

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CONTACT: Chris Fell | chris.fell@pc.ola.org | 519-371-2421