



COMMUNITY NOTICE

For Immediate Release:

Seskehkó:wa/September 3, 2021

ONTARIO OPTOMETRISTS WITHDRAW EYE EXAMS DUE TO FEE DISPUTE

Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program provides registered First Nations and recognized Inuit in Canada with coverage of health benefits, which include vision care benefits. The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne has received notice that effective September 1, 2021 due to a fee dispute with the Province of Ontario, Ontario Optometrists have withdrawn eye exam services for persons who are:

- *19 and under,*
- *65 and older*
- *Or have a medical condition which includes the following, diabetes mellitus, glaucoma, cataract, retinal disease, amblyopia, visual field defects, corneal disease, strabismus, recurrent uveitis, and optic pathway disease.*
- *Ontario NIHB clients who are between the ages of 20-64 years of age are not impacted by this dispute.*

According to Ontario law, provincially insured services must be billed to the province. Optometrists cannot bill the client or any other insurance provider for eye exams, including NIHB.

NIHB clients who are impacted should call their provider and consider re-booking their appointment to a later date, when the Optometrists and the Province have resolved their dispute. Ontario NIHB will monitor this situation closely and update us accordingly.

If you are experiencing any emergency with your vision, please call to see a provider at the Akwesasne Medical Clinic (AMC) or go to the nearest walk-in clinic in Cornwall so that you can receive the necessary vision care.

Should you require additional information please contact the Akwesasne Non-Insured Health Benefits Program at 613-575-2341 ext. 3340, 3341, or 3342.