

Region of Waterloo

Public Health and Paramedic Services

Child, Family and Dental Health

To: Community and Health Services Committee

Meeting Date: March 5, 2024

Report Title: Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Expansion Update within Waterloo Region

1. Recommendation

For Information.

2. Purpose / Issue:

To provide an update on the expansion of the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program to Wellesley Township in partnership with Woolwich Community Health Centre and with community dental providers.

3. Strategic Plan:

This report aligns with the Region's Strategic Plan 2023-2027, priority 3: Equitable Services and Opportunities; exploring models of service through community collaboration and partnerships. These partnerships support access to dental services for low-income seniors.

4. Report Highlights:

- By end of March 2024, the third Ontario Seniors Dental Program clinic will open in the Wellesley Community Health Centre in partnership with the Woolwich Community Health Centre (a tenant at the Wellesley Community Health Centre). The addition of a third clinic will provide greater access to essential dental care for seniors with low incomes, especially those living in the surrounding rural areas.
- Through partnership with local Community Health Centres (Langs, Community Healthcaring Kitchener Waterloo, and Woolwich), 5398 appointments have been completed for seniors accessing the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program in Waterloo Region in 2022 and 2023.
- Since its inception, the demand for the Ontario Seniors Dental Program has exceeded capacity, resulting in waitlists for seniors in need of treatment. In 2023 Public Health requested additional one-time funding from the Ministry of Health to

help reduce the waitlists for the two existing Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program clinics in Waterloo Region (Community Healthcaring Kitchener Waterloo and Langs Community Health Centre in Cambridge).

- With one-time funds in the amount of \$285.5K, Region of Waterloo Public Health successfully partnered with three community dental providers in 2023 to get more timely dental care access for waitlisted seniors. As a result of this partnership, the waitlist was reduced from 21-24 months in the first half of 2023, to 14-16 months by the end of 2023; a significant achievement.
- In 2024, community dental provider partnerships will continue, transitioning to addressing emergency/urgent dental needs as the one-time funding was an interim solution. With the completion of the capital project in Wellesley, seniors on the program will receive dental services at one of the three community health centres as their long-term dental care provider.

5. Background:

The Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) launched in 2019. Initially, based on Ministry requirements, dental services could be provided through public health units, community health centres, and/or Aboriginal Health Access Centres. Since the inception of the program, the Ministry has also permitted partnerships with community dental providers for general or specialty dental services within the parameters of the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program Schedules of Services.

Currently, in Waterloo Region, Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program services are provided at Community Healthcaring Kitchener Waterloo in downtown Kitchener and Langs Community Health Centre in Cambridge, with Wellesley Community Health Centre set to open March 2024 (Woolwich Community Health Centre is a tenant and has obtained a dental clinic space). Appendix A provides details on the three capital project dental clinics for this program. In addition, Waterloo Region is also in partnership with three community general dentists, six denturists, and one endodontist that provide support to the program for emergency and/or speciality dental services. As a result of these external partnerships, Waterloo Region has been able to provide Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program services to enrolled-seniors in a more timely manner, thus reducing the waitlist for obtaining dental care.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities: Nil.

Public: To support ongoing implementation of Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program, Public Health staff meet biannually with executive directors and finance managers from Woolwich, Community Healthcaring, and Langs. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss service targets and issues; review data on locally determined dental service

indicators; and review the central intake processes, utilization, and challenges. Persistent and key issues as shared with the Ministry of Health and oral health managers through the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry meetings.

7. Financial Implications:

The 2024 approved Operating Budget for the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) is \$2.27M which is 100% funded by the Ministry of Health. This supports three community health centre locations in operating the program, including staff salaries, dental equipment, supplies, referrals to specialists/denturists, client interpretation and transportation. In addition, within the operating budget, partnered community dental providers are supporting seniors on the program with emergency and urgent dental services in the interim to seniors obtaining long-term comprehensive dental services with the three community health centres.

The final Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program capital project in Wellesley is 100% Ministry funded and approved at \$584K. From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, actual expenditures were \$114K and the remaining \$470K is projected to be fully expended by March 31, 2024.

Conclusion / Next Steps:

Region of Waterloo Public Health, Facilities, and Woolwich Community Health Centre continue to work in partnership to finalize the Wellesley Community Health Centre Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program dental clinic construction by end of March 2024.

8. Attachments:

Appendix A - Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program capital project dental clinics in Waterloo Region

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