

Provincial Changes to the Uninsured Persons Health Coverage Program

SOS Leadership Group - April 13, 2023

The change

- ▶ Despite strong advocacy, as of April 1, 2023, the Ministry of Health has ended a program established three years ago that expanded access to healthcare for uninsured people across Ontario, with coverage of all hospital-based care and some community-based care.

The impact

- ▶ Removing that stigma and barrier for people to access care is crucial to improving healthcare for marginalized communities.
- ▶ Homeless residents often experience added challenges getting a health card due to a lack of identification and permanent address.
- ▶ The ongoing billing that occurs when patients do access healthcare is demoralizing.
- ▶ Cutting access to healthcare will lead to immense suffering and possibly death for those without health insurance.
- ▶ Burdening our already strained healthcare system, as people may delay seeking care until they are very sick.

Support to reinstate the health coverage program

Local Providers

- ▶ SOS
- ▶ RAAM
- ▶ Saugeen
- ▶ Nawash
- ▶ Withdrawal Management Services
- ▶ Community Addiction Treatment Services
- ▶ New refugee populations

Program Advocates

- ▶ Ontario Medical Association
- ▶ Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians
- ▶ MetaPhi

The ask

WHEREAS the Ministry of Health found it desirable during the COVID-19 pandemic to establish temporary funding for healthcare providers to treat those without coverage under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP); and

WHEREAS this program improved health outcomes and reduced financial hardship or barriers to healthcare for those without insurance or with lost or expired health cards in Ontario before the ministry rescinded it as of April 1, 2023; and

WHEREAS Ontario Medical Association has voiced its concern that ending this program without consultation or a better solution for Ontario's uninsured would be detrimental to those in marginalized communities, such as people experiencing homelessness, those facing language barriers or mobility issues, or newcomers, migrant workers, and international students without coverage; and

WHEREAS removing this program without further action to reduce barriers to healthcare or requirements for obtaining a health card would disproportionately affect marginalized communities at the cost of unnecessary suffering or potential loss of human life.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the County of Grey calls on the Ministry of Health to urgently:

- a. Extend this program by the six months requested by the Ontario Medical Association to provide the opportunity for fulsome consultation with healthcare stakeholders; and
- b. Utilize this program's experience and insight to introduce a new policy that similarly reduces stigma and barriers for those without insurance to access Ontario healthcare and obtain or maintain a health card.

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this motion be sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Health, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.