



February 18, 2013

Dear Ms. Stilwell,

The Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) is a professional association representing Licensed Opticians in Canada. Our mission is to promote Licensed Opticians and the profession; to develop and maintain a professional standard of knowledge and proficiency in our occupational field, and to educate and inform vision care consumers about matters related to their eye health. Today we are writing in regards to the pilot project of the Ministry of Social Development:

“Effective early March, the Ministry of Social Development will be launching a pilot program that will give individuals and families on income and disability assistance the option to purchase eyeglasses online and have the claims submitted to Pacific Blue Cross for payment on behalf of the ministry. Upon the completion of the pilot, the opportunity to participate as a supplier will be extended to other online eyewear companies provided they meet government criteria for providing services.”

It is our understanding the online service provider, Clearly Contacts, must engage the services of an eye care professional (ECP). Clearly Contacts does not (of our information) employ an Optician. The business model of Clearly Contacts is one that circumvents the Eye Care Professional in regards to dispensing of eye wear. That said the OAC does have some concerns regarding this pilot project:

- At what point, in the process does the individual come in contact with an ECP?
- The College of Opticians of BC standards of practice provides guidance to Opticians for individuals that become a patient under their care. Will Clearly Contacts have to follow regulatory standards or does the ministry intend to make an exception for Clearly Contacts as was done last time?
- Will ECP associations and colleges be engaged for feedback on this project?

The gap for Opticians and other ECP's is what should be done with individuals that are not their patients. Many of these patients are groups at risk - children under 12, the physically/mentally challenged and seniors, all which require a great deal of maintenance. How are these individuals going to be cared for if Clearly Contacts only has one physical location? Opticians have for years been serving these demographics in most cases out of goodwill and the care for the community. We at the OAC believe that the ministry has undervalued this service and perhaps does not fully comprehend the amount of follow up care required by the community. We look forward to dialoguing with your ministry on this issue at your earliest convenience.

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Licensed RO
British Columbia Chapter Administrator
Opticians Association of Canada