



Dr. Robert Cranfield, along with patient Rick Day, is among those who feel the provincial government is being short-sighted by delisting preventative services such as chiropractic care in its budget.

Photo by Herb Garbutt

OHIP cuts 'short-sighted' Grit budget gets poor reviews

A budget that includes hefty annual health premiums for Ontario residents, tax hikes on booze and cigarettes, and no more OHIP coverage for most eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic services, is receiving mostly negative reactions locally.

Area chiropractor Dr. Robert Cranfield called the move to cut OHIP coverage for chiropractic care "extremely short-sighted."

"This is a disincentive for people who have spinal problems," said Cranfield. "As a result where are they going to end up going—to their family doctors."

He explained that won't result in health care savings, and chiropractic care actually saves the government hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

OHIP currently covers \$9.65 per patient visit to a maximum of \$150 per year.

He believes the extra money patients will now have to pay will be a deterrent to some, especially low-income people and those on fixed incomes, such as seniors.

One of Cranfield's regular patients, Gerri Schaljo of Acton, says delisting of chiropractic and physiotherapy services "is a knee-jerk reaction that is going to cause more long-range problems."

"Regular chiropractic care helps in many other health areas. A problem that could be dealt with immediately in the chiropractor's office may not be dealt with immediately and it will fester and become worse and end up costing more in the long run," said Schaljo.

Local optometrist Dr. Bruce Foley said the delisting of coverage for eye exams for those aged 20 to 64, will have "a negative effect on some people because they simply can't afford it."

"I don't think as a profession we're surprised," said optometrist Dr. Caroline Teske. She said the optometrists' association has been lobbying for change for some time.

Optometrists have not received a fee increase for eye exams in 15 years, said Foley.

"I hope the public won't let their eyecare suffer," said Teske.

Local physiotherapist Gerry Ross said there are no OHIP-funded physiotherapy clinics in north Halton so the delisting won't affect the clinics in town. However, Ross said, "physiotherapy is a necessary service in terms of restoring comfort and function."

"Access to this service is restricted to those who have extended medical coverage or are able to pay for it themselves. This means many people in need are not going to be able to access the health care that they need to return to a level of health that allows them to be pro-

ductive," said Ross.

Acton resident Iona Piehl, a smoker, was not surprised by the hike in taxes on cigarettes. "They do it every time," she said.

Piehl said if the health premium "is going to help our health services it's fine, but with the record of the government I don't think so. I'm not holding my breath."

Christie Duke was less impressed with the health premium.

"I pay already into a health care plan at my work, now I have to pay into the government's plan as well. Neither of them will pay for the surgery that I require," said Duke.

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh didn't have anything good to say about the Liberal government's first budget.

He said Ontario residents "stand at the precipice of economic disaster, faced with a Liberal budget that will significantly hike taxes while providing fewer health and public services."

"The Liberals promised no tax increases and better services," said Chudleigh. "Now they are hammering Ontarians with tax increases including a new health care tax, a hydro tax, tobacco and alcohol taxes and driver's licence fee increase. Despite all that extra money, the Liberals are reducing health services by ending health coverage for chiropractic and physiotherapy and routine eye exams."

Chudleigh believes that Finance Minister Greg Sorbara "is wrecking the foundations on which Ontario's strong economy is built."

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce had a much more positive view of the budget, and gave the government a B+, based on its commitment to cut the "job killing capital tax, a plan to eliminate the deficit and a focused approach to finding Ontarians' priorities."

"This government is going to need to maintain its focus on the economy—maintain discipline in the coming months and years," said Norm Paget, president of the Chamber. "And Halton Hills Chamber, through the Ontario Chamber of Commerce will continue to advocate on behalf of business for a quicker end to the capital tax, and a quicker end to the budget deficit."

He added the consequences of returning to a series of deficit budgets, higher taxation levels and irresponsible spending are economic stagnation and decline. He said the Chamber is committed to working with the government to find solutions through a reasoned and responsible approach to fiscal policy.

Conservation Halton also gave the budget high marks for the government's commitment to conservation and safe drinking water.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

call **APPLEBY SYSTEMS**

**COOL COMFORT
FANTASTIC SAVINGS**

- Free 10 Year Parts Warranty
- Free Winter Cover for Air Conditioner
- Don't Pay for 90 Days (OAC)



Offer expires soon - call today!

*Proudly Serving Halton Residents
for over 35 Years
from our office here in Georgetown*

- 24 Hour Emergency Service
- Qualified Mechanics • Quality Workmanship



*Total package rebate, ask for details.

APPLEBY SYSTEMS 877-8990

Fireplace, Heating & Air Conditioning Sales & Service
118 Guelph St. Georgetown (at Maple)

Hours: Monday - Friday 9-5; Saturday 11-4; Appointments available after hours upon request



Bruce Hood

Your Liberal Candidate for
Wellington-Halton Hills

*"I'm choosing Bruce Hood to be my
representative in Ottawa because he knows that
the game must be played by the rules."*

Mayor Rod Finnie - Town of Erin

The Right Call For a New Riding

www.brucehood.ca

Give us a call!
1-888-860-4638

Liberal
TeamMartin