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# 2019 Annual Report to Government



ALBERTA college  
of OPTOMETRISTS

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# Our Mission, Mandate and Values

The Mission of the Alberta College of Optometrists is to protect and serve the public by regulating, promoting excellence and providing direction to our Regulated Members.

## Mandate

- We will carry out our activities and govern our Regulated Members in a manner that protects and serves the public interest.
- We will provide direction to our Regulated Members and regulate the practice of optometry.
- We will establish, maintain and enforce appropriate registration requirements, a Continuing Competence Program and Standards of Practice for the profession of optometry.
- We will establish, maintain and enforce a Code of Ethics.
- We will carry on the activities of the college and perform all other duties and functions in accordance with the *Health Professions Act*.



## Values

- We value the privilege of self-regulation granted to us by the Government and the people of Alberta.
- We value honesty, fairness, reasonableness, transparency and effectiveness in our daily activities.
- We value improved patient outcomes supported by collegial and professional communication with other health care practitioners, technological innovation, evidence-based research and implementation of new and improved models of patient care.
- We value individual practitioner responsibility for always striving to do what is in the best interests of the patient and meeting generally accepted standards of care.
- We value the personal and professional commitment required of competent, knowledgeable, skilled and caring practitioners to ensure they maintain their level of competence throughout their careers.
- We value flexibility, transparency, honesty and reasonableness in discussions and joint endeavors with government and all other external stakeholders.
- We value feedback from patients, the provincial government, other regulatory colleges and any other interested stakeholder on our activities and performance.

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# 2019 ACO Council



**Front Row (seated from Left to Right)**

Dr. James Thompson (Past-President)

Dr. Nasir Khan (President)

Dr. Tom Wilk (Regulated Council Member)

**Back Row (standing from Left to Right)**

Dr. Rob Kloepfer (Regulated Council Member)

Dr. Samantha Giang (Regulated Council Member)

Dr. Rob McLaughlin (Regulated Council Member)

Dr. Nohad Teliani (President-Elect)

Dr. Jennifer Zwicker (Public Council Member)

Dr. Gordon Hensel (Registrar)

**Regrets** – Mrs. Barbara Boyer (Public Council Member)

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# President's Report

2019 marked yet another successful and positive year for the profession of optometry. The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) is extremely appreciative of the privilege granted by the Government of Alberta to allow us to regulate Doctors of Optometry in the best interests of the public.

My goal as President was to carry on the initiative of previous ACO Presidents to keep Alberta as the leader in optometry regulation in Canada. Some the key items achieved in 2019 include:

- The request for scope expansion for Alberta Doctors of Optometry to be able to perform procedures that we have already been trained at our doctoral-level education institutions. In anticipation of these potential changes, the ACO held an Advanced Procedures Course in June 2019 in Calgary. This refresher course was attended by 90 doctors. This course sold out in under 90 minutes with a 230-member waitlist.
- The implementation of Bill 21 (2018) "A Bill to Protect Patients". The ACO Council revised the ACO Standards of Practice in a very short period of time to achieve the mandated implementation deadline of April 2019.
- A review of our registration practices to ensure that we were in compliance with Bill 11, the "Fair Registration Practices Act". This Bill was created to allow a fair process to register individuals who trained in a foreign country to be allowed to be working in their field in a timely manner. The ACO met registration standards through the credentialing and examination process managed by the Federation of Optometric Regulatory Authorities of Canada
- A comprehensive review of the ACO Continuing Competency Program to ensure it is valid, transparent, and effectively contributes to the maintenance of a practitioner's competence throughout their career. Although, our current program is the most robust in the country, we added new review protocols and best practices in addition to collaborating with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta to ensure we met our mandate of protecting the public.



Above is just a small glimpse of what the ACO achieved in 2019. Should our scope expansion request be authorized, all Albertans will benefit from improved patient outcomes, increased efficiencies in the health care system and allow Doctors of Optometry to serve the public of Alberta with the best eye and vision care they deserve. We will work with all stakeholders to achieve this goal together.

Dr. Nasir Khan  
President, Alberta College of Optometrists

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# Public Member's Report

The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) has two Public Members, as mandated by the *Health Professions Act*. Dr. Jennifer Zwicker is an Assistant Professor and Director of Health Policy at the University of Calgary School of Public Policy and is in her final year of her second three-year term as a Public Member on council. Mrs. Barbara Boyer is a Registered Nurse and health care consultant and is in her third year of her first three-year term as a Public Member on council.

We are extremely honored and privileged to serve as Public Members on the ACO Council. As voting members in council meetings who are not optometrists, we represent the public's interest on the ACO Council in governing and carrying out its mandate in a manner that protects and serves the public's interests. As volunteer Albertans appointed by the Government of Alberta, we have been engaged in the maintenance and enforcement of the Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, registration requirements and a Continuing Competence Program as they impact Regulated Members, and in supporting members in practicing to their full scope of practice. In addition, the ACO has been very proactive at the national level, advancing the concepts of advanced education designations and specialty residencies for optometrists.

The council and staff of the ACO consistently demonstrate their commitment to protect and serve the public interest of all Albertans. They act with integrity and transparency in a fiscally responsible manner. The ACO continues to develop good working relationships with other health professions and government partners, with the goal of improving patient outcomes through increased professional collaboration and communication. With increasing emphasis on effective governance of council and efficient decision-making that keeps the public interest at the forefront, we commend them for their professionalism.

We are confident that the ACO Council will continue to fulfill its mandate to protect and serve the public by regulating and providing direction to the optometric profession.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dr. Jennifer Zwicker & Mrs. Barbara Boyer  
Public Members, Alberta College of Optometrists

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# Governance

The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) Council manages and conducts the activities of the college, exercises the rights, powers and privileges and carries out the duties of the college in the name of and on behalf of the college. The ACO Council operates under a Policy Governance structure.

The ACO Council is comprised of two Public Council Members and six voting Regulated Council Members. The Past-President sits as a non-voting Council Member.

In 2017, Mrs. Barbara Boyer was appointed by the provincial government to her first three-year term and Dr. Jennifer Zwicker was reappointed for her second three-year term on Council. As such, both will have their three-year terms expire in December 2020.

All college committees are governed by strict guidelines, Terms of Reference and operating policies as directed by the *Health Professions Act, Optometrists Profession Regulation, ACO Bylaws* and the ACO Policy Governance Manual. These guidelines, Terms of Reference and policies are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to be reasonable, legally correct, effective and enforceable.



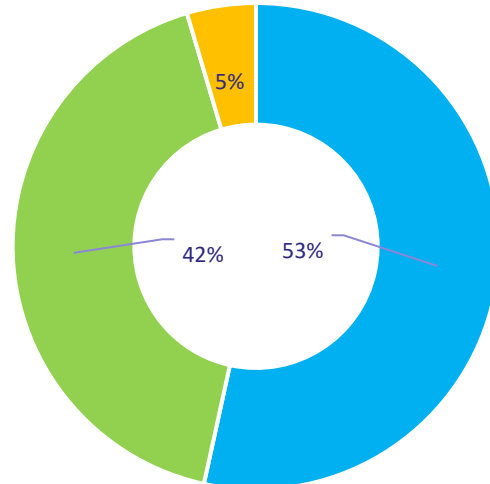
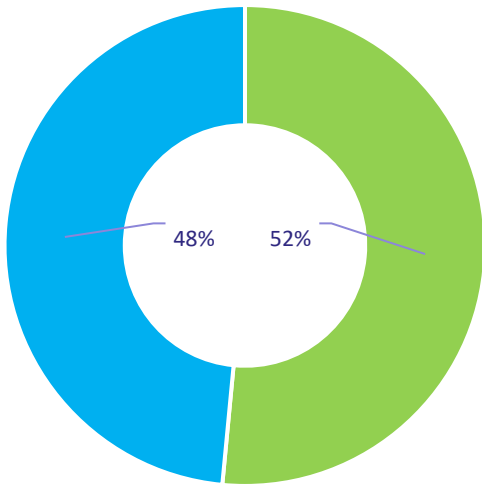
# Registration Information

Female 427 Male 402

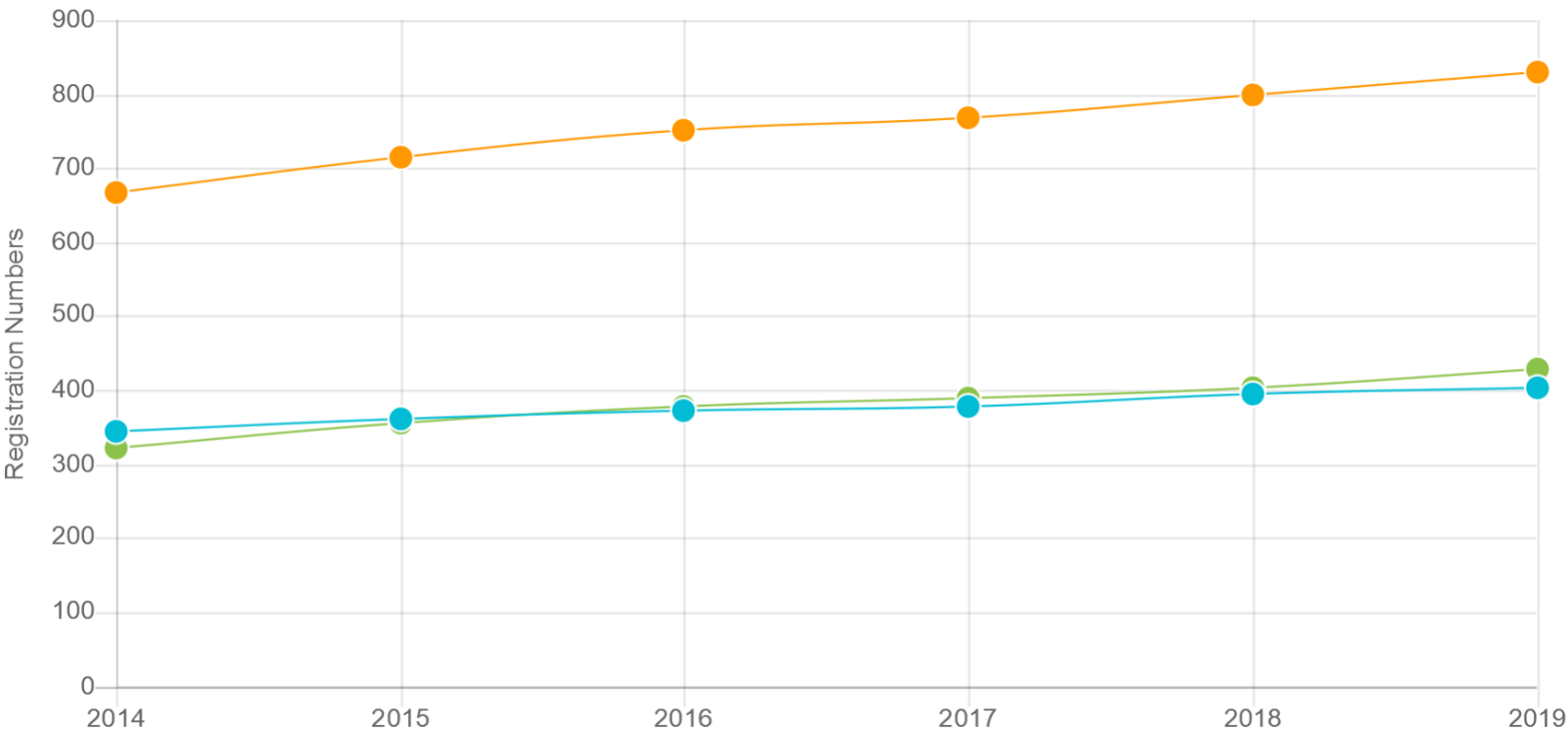
American Trained 443

Canadian Trained 348

Internationally Trained 38



Male Female TOTAL





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# Standards of Practice & ACO Code of Ethics

The ACO Council and the ACO Standards of Practice Committee review and revise the ACO Standards of Practice, Guidelines to the ACO Standards of Practice, ACO Code of Ethics and the ACO Clinical Practice Guidelines on a regular basis. These reviews are necessary due to the constant evolution and advances in optometric and medical science, innovative technological updates and legislative changes.



All standards and guidelines are meant to provide guidance and direction as to the scope of services that Doctors of Optometry are authorized to provide and the manner in which those services are provided. They are based on the best available and most current optometric and medical clinical evidence and research.

All ACO standards and guidelines may be used by the ACO in judging and assessing the competence and professional conduct of Regulated Members.

In 2019, the ACO developed a patient therapy funding program, revised the ACO Standards of Practice, updated the ACO website to be more user friendly and held member information meetings as required by Bill 21 – An Act to Protect Patients.

The Alberta College of Optometrists is very proud to be viewed as a leader in Canada in the development, revision and enforcement of optometric Standards of Practice and Clinical Practice Guidelines.

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# Canadian Optometry Training Programs

## Canadian Schools of Optometry

Currently, the Universities of Waterloo and Montreal continue to offer the only two Schools of Optometry in Canada.



Students from both Canadian schools

participate in clinical externship rotations in various clinics throughout Alberta. The ACO continues to enjoy a great relationship with both schools to ensure that graduating students have the didactic education and clinical experiences necessary to provide safe, skilled and competent vision care services immediately upon graduation.

## Western School of Optometry

As optometrists provide the vast majority of primary vision care services in our province, the development of a Faculty of Optometry at one of Alberta's renowned universities would integrate with and complement the short and long range plans of Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services. The ACO is committed to collaborating with our government, the public and all other stakeholders in accomplishing this goal.

Due to the limited number of enrollment spots at the Universities of Waterloo and Montreal Schools of Optometry, many Canadians are forced to pursue optometric education opportunities in the United States. The net effect is that we now have more Canadian students enrolled in U.S. Schools of Optometry than in both Canadian Schools of Optometry combined.

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# Licensure and Mobility

## Canadian Licensure Examinations

The Alberta College of Optometrists accepts the Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) entry-to-practice examination for initial registration to Alberta. OEBC offers a bilingual, psychometrically validated, and defensible assessment of entry-to-practice competence in optometry in Canada. This exam consists of a written exam and a clinical OSCE that utilizes standardized patients. All provinces accept the OEBC exam for initial licensure to their province.



## Advanced Scope Certification

As of December 31, 2018, all Regulated Members of the ACO were mandated to be Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agent (TPA) and Advanced Scope certified. A 2019 Practice Permit was not issued to practitioners who did not meet these requirements. In addition, no current Regulated Member was “grandfathered” into these certifications as all members had to successfully pass a rigorous certification course and final exam. To assist our members in achieving this certification, the ACO sponsored an additional certification course in 2019 for those few members who were not able to achieve certification in previous years.

## Labor Mobility

As per the labor mobility provisions in the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), the Alberta College of Optometrists accepts license applications from practitioners who are registered in good standing in any other Canadian province or territory. As three provinces accept the US Optometry Board Exam (NBEO) for initial licensure to their province, a research study comparing the OEBC Exam to the NBEO Exam was completed in 2019 to ensure these practitioners met minimum registration requirements. Further information on the OEBC is available at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca) and further information on the NBEO is available at [www.optometry.org](http://www.optometry.org).

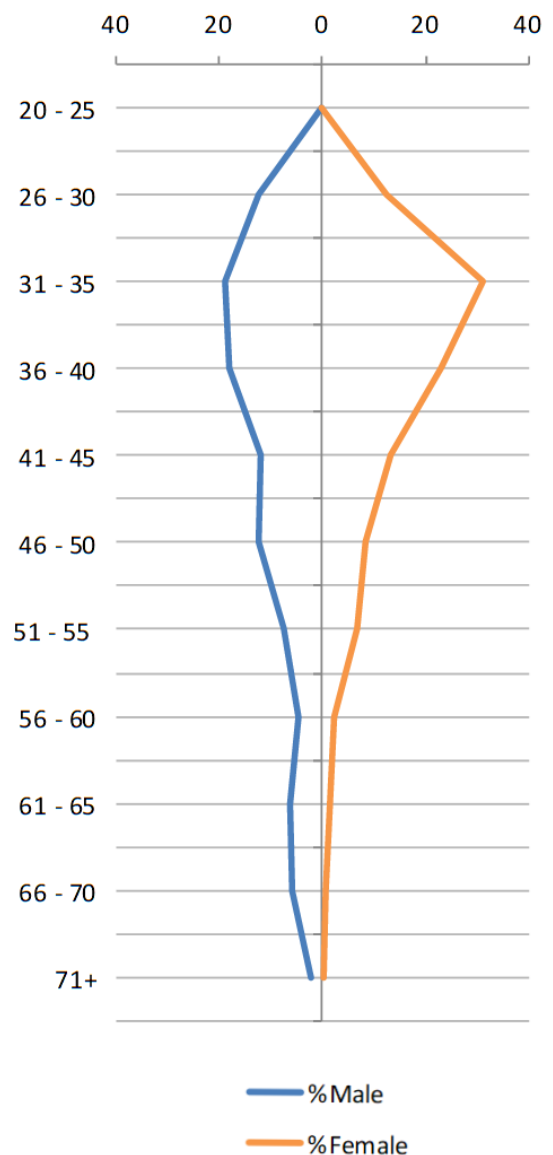
# ACO Registration Committee

The ACO Registration Committee determines registration requirements for applicants to our province as well as developing, revising and delivering the ACO Jurisprudence Exam. The results of the ACO Jurisprudence Exam are analyzed on a yearly basis and questions are modified based on any revisions or changes to the *Health Professions Act, Optometrists Profession Regulation* and ACO Bylaws. Applicants are able to write the ACO Jurisprudence Exam in either Calgary or Edmonton on any weekday.

In 2019, a total of 54 candidates challenged the ACO Jurisprudence Exam. The average mark was 80.1% and the range was 56% to 96%. As the pass mark is set at 70%, the five candidates who did not pass were given a short period of time to review the exam material and write an alternative Jurisprudence Exam. All five candidates passed the alternative ACO Jurisprudence Exam.

In summary, all complete registration applications received in 2019 were approved as all applicants met ACO registration requirements. As such, no registration reviews or appeals were required. The ACO does not have any Regulated Members registered in the Courtesy Registration register.

### Age + Sex Distribution Graph



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# ACO Continuing Competence Program

## PURPOSE

- To measure, assess and enhance the knowledge, skill and judgment of practicing optometrists.
- To ensure that each Regulated Member meets the prevailing Standards of Practice required to provide appropriate vision care to each patient.
- To set an expectation that each Regulated Member will practice according to the Alberta College of Optometrists Code of Ethics.

## CRITERIA

- To be effective, valid, accurate, honest and fair.
- To be reliable, accountable and measurable.
- To be flexible and non-threatening.
- To be educational and contemporary.

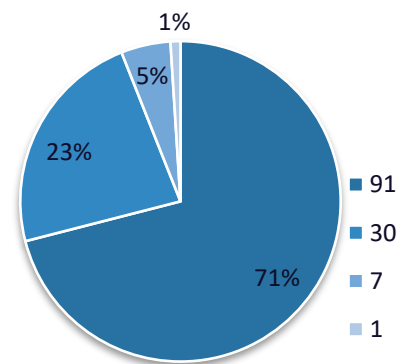
## GOALS

- Maintain the competence, knowledge and skills he/she needs to provide service to the public,
- Continually enhance the quality and delivery of optometric services, and,
- Ensure his/her continuing educational development.

Participation by all Regulated Members is compulsory. The Alberta College of Optometrists defines competence as having the right skills to perform the right procedure to the right person at the right time. In 2019, the ACO continued the process to evolve the ACO Continuing Competence Program into a Performance Assessment process.

In 2019, a total of 129 on-site Practice Visits were conducted. An additional 8 reviews were tabled due to practitioner resignation, retirement or moving out-of-province. Of the 129 reviews conducted:

- 91 were deemed satisfactory.
- 30 were deemed satisfactory with minor compliance.
- 7 were deemed a fail with a follow-up Practice Visit scheduled in 90 days.
- 1 Regulated Member was referred immediately to the ACO Complaints Director for further investigation and possible disciplinary action.



The cost to operate this program is entirely funded by Alberta optometrists as part of their yearly dues. No funding comes from the provincial government or private industry.

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# Complaints & Discipline

Although the vast majority of Albertans enjoy very positive experiences with their Doctor of Optometry, there are times where issues arise between the patient and the optometrist. The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) prides itself on following a fair, responsible and transparent complaints process as mandated by the Health Professions Act (HPA).

## General Overview

The HPA mandates that: The Complaints Director is responsible for reviewing all formal written, signed complaints which are submitted to the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) and directed against Regulated Members of the ACO.

The Complaints Director utilizes a variety of options following the receipt of a formal complaint. These action steps include immediate dismissal of the complaint (if the complaint is trivial or vexatious), formal mediation of the complaint (attempting to solve the complaint via encouraging communication, etc.) and the conducting of an investigation into the complaint.

Following the completion of an investigation, a complaint can be dismissed, referred to an ACO Hearing Tribunal (if sufficient evidence of unprofessional conduct exists against a Regulated Member) or the complaint may be dismissed provided that the investigated Regulated Member of the ACO agrees to and meets all requirements set forth within a Member Undertaking agreement between that Regulated Member and the ACO.



If the complaint is dismissed by the Complaints Director, the complainant may submit an appeal of the dismissal to the ACO Hearings Director, who will then assemble a Complaint Review Committee (CRC) to review all documentation relating to the complaint and its dismissal. Following the conclusion of the CRC review, the dismissal may be upheld, may be investigated further or may be referred to an ACO Hearing Tribunal.

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### Carry-Over from 2018

The Hearing Tribunal which was adjourned has taken place and resulted in a finding of unprofessional conduct.

### Highlights from 2019

In 2019, twenty-four (24) new, formal complaints against Regulated Members of the ACO were received:

- Five (5) formal complaints were dismissed immediately as being deemed vexatious or trivial.
- Eleven (11) formal complaints were resolved through formal mediation between the optometrist and patient.
- Six (6) formal complaints were investigated and subsequently dismissed due to insufficient or no evidence of unprofessional conduct.
- One (1) formal complaint was investigated and subsequently dismissed based upon the Regulated Member agreeing to and fulfilling the requirements set forth in a Member Undertaking.
- One (1) formal complaint was investigated and subsequently referred to the ACO Hearings Director for a Hearing Tribunal. This Hearing Tribunal has been adjourned and the new date for the Hearing has not yet been determined.

One appeal of a complaint dismissal was received in 2019. Following a CRC review the complaint dismissal was upheld.

No assessments or decisions required under Section 118 of the *Health Professions Act* were required in 2019.

Dr. Rob Eastwood

Complaints Director, Alberta College of Optometrists

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# Financials

To the Members of Alberta College of Optometrists:

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Alberta College of Optometrists, which comprise the statement of financial position as at December 31, 2019, and the statement of changes in net assets, statement of operations and statements of cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

## Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

## Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian general accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosure in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgement, including the assessment of the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

## Opinion

In our opinion, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Alberta College of Optometrists as at December 31, 2019, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

June 12, 2020 - Edmonton, Alberta

Pisko & Miskiw LLP  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

## ASSETS

	2018	2019
Current Assets:	\$	\$
Cash	1,048,128	1,192,072
Term Deposits	1,588,252	1,613,362
Accounts receivable	29,914	52,684
Prepaid expenses	49,421	65,077
Total current assets:	2,715,715	2,923,195
Property and Equipment	524,101	534,417
Total assets:	3,239,816	3,457,612

## LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	83,856	92,365
Members' due collected in advance	905,350	940,850
Total current liabilities:	989,206	1,033,215

## NET ASSETS

Investment in Property and Equipment	524,101	534,417
Unrestricted	1,726,509	1,889,980
Net Assets:	2,250,610	2,424,397
Total Net Assets:	3,239,816	3,457,612

## > REVENUES

	2018	2019
Member Dues	880,550	916,850
Application and Registration Fees	36,100	30,800
Professional Corporation Fees	36,800	42,900
Rental income	14,112	14,112
Interest Income	42,986	44,830
Hearing Tribunal Recoveries	15,000	18,500

## > EXPENDITURES

	2018	2019
Administrative and Executive	217,269	366,185
Amortization	21,706	27,263
College Committees and Meetings	193,174	215,158
Computer and IT Costs	23,476	22,421
Council	72,851	80,180
Legal Fees	70,853	46,372
Office Building Costs	31,103	27,705

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# Notes to the Financial Statements

The Summary Financial Statement is derived from audited financial statements, prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards. The preparation of this Summary Financial Statement requires the ACO office staff to determine the information that needs to be reflected in them so that they are consistent in all material respects with, and represent a fair summary of the audited statement.

The audited financial statements of the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) are available upon request by contacting the ACO office.



The College initially measures its financial assets and liabilities at fair value adjusted by, in the case of a financial instrument that will not be measured subsequently at fair value, the amount of transaction costs directly attributable to the instrument. The college subsequently measures all of its financial assets and liabilities at amortized cost, which includes cash,

term deposits, accounts receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

All ACO Regulated Member fees (Practice Permit, Professional Corporation Permit, registration fee, etc.) are set by the ACO Council. Term Deposits are held for periods of up to five years with annual interest rates that fluctuate based on market conditions. The principal investment is guaranteed.

The College has a risk management framework to monitor, evaluate and manage the principal risks assumed with financial instruments. The risks that arise from transacting financial instruments include credit risk, liquidity risk and interest rate risk. There have been no changes in the colleges risk exposures from the prior year.



ALBERTA college  
of OPTOMETRISTS

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