
2020 Annual Report to Government



ALBERTA college
of OPTOMETRISTS

Table of Contents

Our Mission, Mandate and Values	3
2020 ACO Council	4
President’s Report	5
Public Member’s Report	6
Governance.....	7
Registration Information.....	8
ACO Registration Committee.....	10
Licensure and Mobility	11
Canadian Optometry Training Programs.....	12
Standards of Practice & ACO Code of Ethics	13
ACO Continuing Competence Program.....	14
Complaints & Discipline	15
Financials	17
Statement of Financial Position.....	19
Notes to the Financial Statements.....	21

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.

2020 ACO Council

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic gathering restrictions, a group photo of Council was not produced.

The Members of the 2020 ACO Council include:

- Mrs. Barbara Boyer (Public Council Member)
- Dr. Samantha Giang (Regulated Council Member)
- Dr. Nasir Khan (President)
- Dr. Rob Kloepfer (Regulated Council Member)
- Dr. Rob Mclaughlin (Regulated Council Member)
- Dr. Nohad Teliani (President-Elect)
- Dr. James Thompson (Past-President)
- Dr. Tom Wilk (Regulated Council Member)



President's Report

2020 marked yet another successful and positive year for the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO). We are extremely appreciative of the privilege granted by the Government of Alberta to allow us to regulate and guide Doctors of Optometry in the best interests of the public.

My goal as President was to carry on the initiative of previous ACO Presidents of keeping Alberta as the leader in optometry regulation at the national level. To this end, we submitted a "Proposal to Amend the Optometrists Professional Regulation" to Alberta Health in September 2020.

Unfortunately, all Albertans were severely impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020. Our goal was to educate and regulate our members on proper infection prevention and control measures according to information given to us from the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta Health and AHS. The ACO issued 32 directives in 2020. Highlights included:

- As requested by the Premier on March 26, optometry was declared an essential service. We mandated that our members stop providing routine eye care; however, continue to offer essential, emergent, and critical eye care services. This resulted in many Albertans benefitting from quick access to services in their local optometry clinic with the added benefit of not overwhelming Hospital Emergency Departments with eye and vision related emergencies.
- The ACO assisted our members in utilizing new technologies to provide eye care through various virtual telehealth platforms. This was extremely beneficial to those individuals who may have been positive with COVID-19 or those who were not able to leave their homes due to other medical issues.

Above is a small glimpse of what the ACO achieved last year. We are hopeful that our proposed scope expansion will be approved so that Albertans can benefit from improved patient outcomes, quick access to safe and competent services in local communities and the creation of efficiencies in the health care system. Our members demonstrated their commitment to providing safe and competent eye care services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope we can achieve this goal together in the near future.

Dr. Nasir Khan
President, Alberta College of Optometrists



Public Member's Report

Prior to the changes to the Health Professions Act in April 2021, the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) was required to have two Public Members as voting members. Following the expiry of the term of the second public member last year, Mrs. Barbara Boyer has been serving as the sole public member since that time. She is a retired nurse and health care consultant and is in her final year of her three-year term as a Public Member on council.

I am extremely honored and privileged to serve as a Public Member on the ACO Council. As a member of council who is not an optometrist, I represent the public's perspective on the ACO Council. As a volunteer appointed by the Government of Alberta, and an equal voting member on Council, I 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.

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. For the past year, the ACO has been very involved in effectively communicating and assisting with the implementation of new and updated infection prevention and control policies from Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the ACO has been very proactive at the national level, advancing the concepts of advanced education designations and specialty residencies for Optometrists. With increasing emphasis on effective governance of council and efficient decision-making that keeps the public interest at the forefront, I commend the ACO for their commitment and their professionalism.

I am 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,

Mrs. Barbara Boyer

Public Member, Alberta College of Optometrists

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 and follows the mandate set out in the *Health Professions Act*.

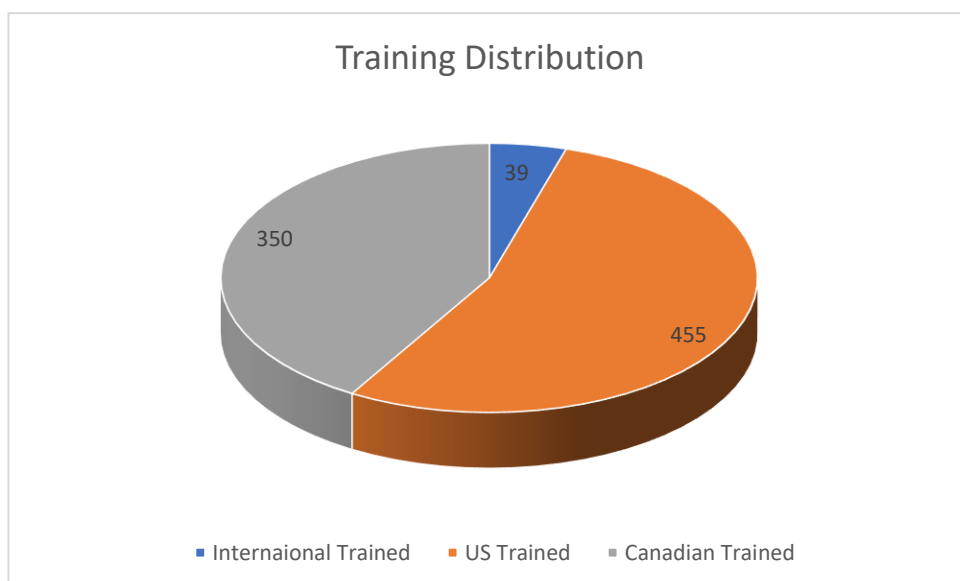
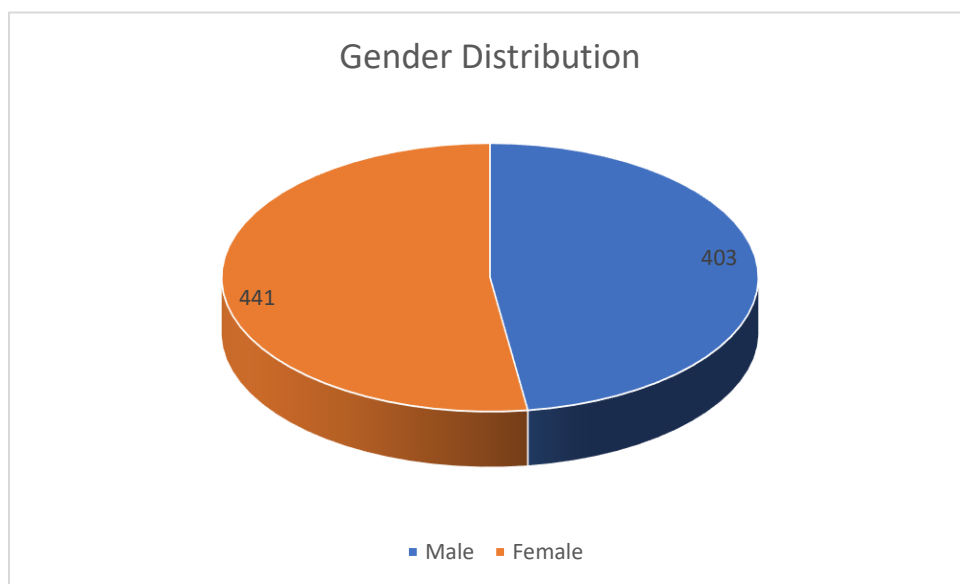
The ACO Council is comprised of two voting Public Council Members and six voting Regulated Council Members. The Past-President sits as a non-voting Council Member. Following the passage of Bill 30 (The Health Statues Amendment Act) in 2020, we are looking forward to increasing the Public Member representation on our Council to 50%.

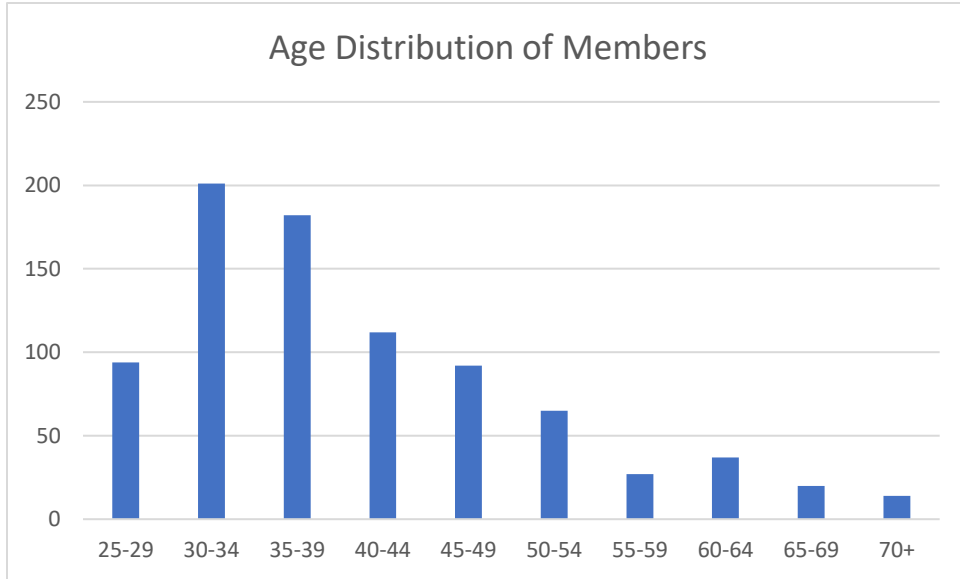
All college committees are governed by strict guidelines, Terms of Reference and operating policies as directed by the *Health Professions Act*, *Optometrists Profession Regulation*, ACO Bylaws and the ACO Policy Governance Manual. These guidelines, Terms of Reference and policies are reviewed on a regular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



Registration Information

In 2020, the ACO had a total of 844 Regulated Members which is an increase of 1.8% from the previous year. Of this number, a total of 441 members were female and 403 were male. This small influx of new members is lower than normally seen (in previous years) due to a delay in registration caused by a rescheduling of the National Optometry Board Exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.





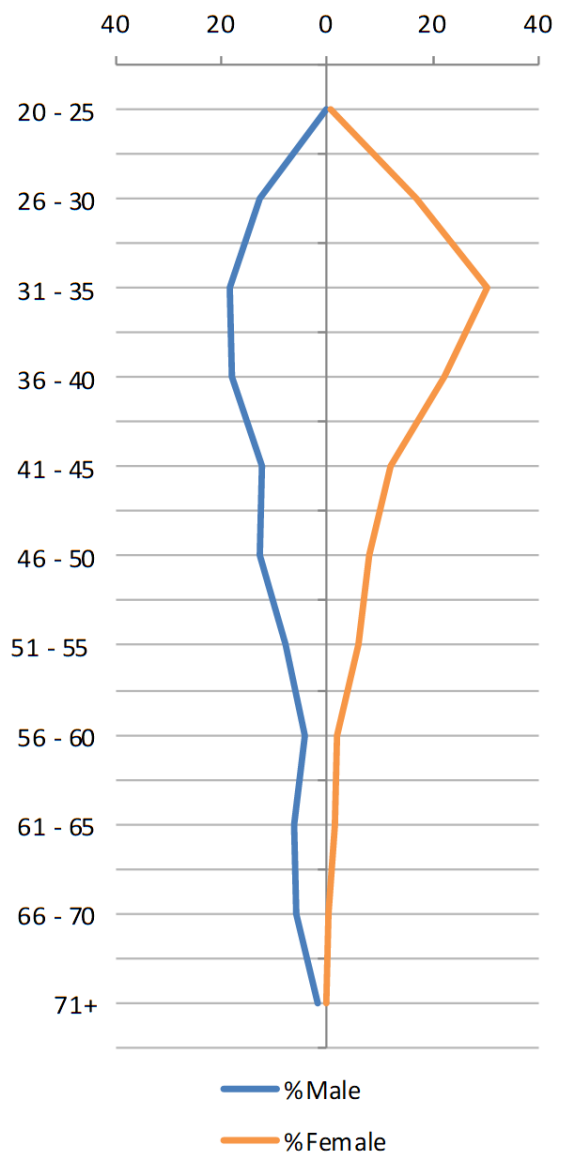
ACO Registration Committee

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 2020, a total of 37 candidates challenged the ACO Jurisprudence Exam. The average mark was 78.4% and the range was 62% to 90%. As the pass mark is set at 70%, the three candidates who did not pass on their first attempt were given a period of time to review the exam material before writing an alternative Jurisprudence Exam. All three candidates passed the alternative ACO Jurisprudence Exam.

In summary, all complete registration applications received in 2020 were approved as all applicants met the 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



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. No current Regulated Member was “grandfathered” into either of these certifications as all members had to successfully pass a rigorous certification course and final exam. In addition, Practice Permits are not issued to applicants who do not meet these requirements. New applicants to the ACO are able to choose from a variety of certification course options (including an on-line certification course) to meet this registration requirement.

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. Following the completion and publication of a research study that compared the OEBC Exam (Canadian) to the NBEO Exam (US Exam) in 2019, all Canadian optometric regulatory organizations are reviewing whether both exams meet our entry-to-practice registration requirements. A decision is expected by the end of 2021.

Further information on the OEBC is available at www.oebc.ca and further information on the NBEO is available at www.optometry.org.

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.

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.

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 are also be used by the ACO in judging and assessing the competence and professional conduct of Regulated Members.

In 2020, as we learned more about the COVID-19 pandemic and possible routes of transmission, the ACO reviewed and updated the ACO Infection Prevention and Control Policy on several occasions to match policies set out by Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health to better protect our members, their staff and their patients. We also updated several Clinical Practice Guidelines to guide our members on new technologies and advances in vision care procedures (Telehealth, Lab Testing, Vaccinations, Optometric Treatment Procedures, etc.).

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.

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.

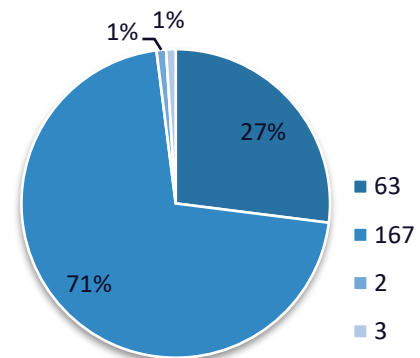
GOALS

- 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. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, the ACO pivoted the on-site review process to a patient chart assessment that also included a self-assessment.

In 2020, a total of 235 chart reviews were conducted. An additional 8 reviews were tabled due to practitioner resignation, retirement or moving out-of-province. Of the 235 reviews conducted:

- 63 were deemed satisfactory.
- 167 were deemed satisfactory with minor compliance.
- 2 were deemed a failure with a follow-up assessment scheduled in 90 days.
- 3 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.

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.

Carry-Over from 2019

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

Highlights from 2020

In 2020, twenty-one (21) new, formal complaints against Regulated Members of the ACO were received:

- Eight (8) formal complaints were dismissed immediately as being deemed vexatious or trivial.
- One (1) formal complaint was resolved through formal mediation between the optometrist and patient.
- Ten (10) 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 received and is still currently under investigation.

No appeals of a complaint dismissals were received in 2020.

No assessments or decisions required under Section 118 of the *Health Professions Act* were required in 2020.

No ACO Therapy and Counselling Program funds were accessed by patients in 2020 because of complaints of sexual abuse, misconduct or activities of a sexual nature.

Dr. Rob Eastwood
ACO Complaints Director

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members of Alberta College of Optometrists

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Alberta College of Optometrists, which comprise the statement of financial position as at December 31, 2020, and the statements of changes in net assets, operations and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at December 31, 2020, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with ASNPO.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, 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.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the organization ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the organization financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- ♦ Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ♦ Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit 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 organization's internal control.
- ♦ Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- ♦ Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- ♦ Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

	2019	2020
Current Assets:	\$	\$
Cash	1,192,072	1,311,554
Term Deposits	1,613,362	1,656,180
Accounts receivable	52,684	20,782
Prepaid expenses	65,077	17,198
Total current assets:	2,923,195	3,005,714
Property and Equipment	534,417	525,626
Total assets:	3,457,612	3,531,340

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	92,365	59,282
Members' due collected in advance	940,850	957,600
Total current liabilities:	1,033,215	1,016,882

NET ASSETS

Investment in Property and Equipment	534,417	525,626
Unrestricted	1,889,980	1,988,832
Net Assets:	2,424,397	2,514,458
Total Net Assets:	3,457,612	3,531,340

➤ REVENUES

	2019	2020
Member Dues	916,850	935,000
Application and Registration Fees	30,800	28,000
Professional Corporation Fees	42,900	39,650
Rental income	14,112	14,112
Interest Income	44,830	14,262
Hearing Tribunal Recoveries	18,500	7,500

➤ EXPENDITURES

	2019	2020
Administrative and Executive	366,185	511,955
Amortization	27,263	28,303
College Committees and Meetings	215,158	253,606
Computer and IT Costs	22,421	27,730
Council	80,180	62,597
Legal Fees	46,372	39,299
Office Building Costs	27,705	24,973

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 primary 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

Dr. Gordon Hensel, Registrar, ACO
#102 8407 - Argyll Road NW
Edmonton, Alberta T6C 4B2

Tel: (780) 466-5999

Toll Free: 1-800-668-2694 (Alberta only)

Fax: (780) 466-5969

E-mail: registrar@collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca