

MEDIA RELEASE: JOINT STATEMENT

December 2, 2024

New vision for optometry education in Western Canada, via Calgary

University partnership explores Canada's first school of optometry west of Ontario

CALGARY - An agreement between the University of Waterloo and Mount Royal University marks a promising step toward advancing the education of eye health professionals in Canada and the provision of eye health services to a rapidly aging nation.

The University of Waterloo, home to Canada's only English-language school of optometry, [recently released details of a signed memorandum of understanding](#).

Expanding optometry education into Alberta would create valuable new education and training opportunities for the next generation of Canadian eye health care professionals and open critical new pathways to keep local talent learning and working here, said Dr. Sophia Leung, President of the Alberta Association of Optometrists (AAO).

"English-speaking Canadians have two choices for optometry school: attend Waterloo or go out-of-country. Expanding Waterloo's world-class program to Mount Royal University would be a game changer for eye care in Western Canada and make Alberta's advanced education system a leader in Western Canadian health care training," Dr. Leung said.

Dr. Michelle Duke, President of the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO), said optometry graduates from Calgary would enter the workforce ready to offer safe, effective and accessible solutions to prevent unnecessary vision loss in rural and underserved areas of Alberta.

"Expanding this program at Mount Royal aligns with [the Alberta College of Optometrists' effort to expand the scope of practice](#) to keep pace with the university training and national certification standards, which have leapfrogged Alberta's current regulations. A new school of optometry will serve the growing demand for eye health services, improve access to vision care in diverse communities, and reduce wait times for specialized services," Dr. Duke said.

Optometrists are university-educated primary health care practitioners who examine, assess, diagnose, prescribe, correct, treat and manage eye diseases and disorders. Optometrists offer the broadest spectrum of services in the eye health spectrum to the largest population of Canadians.

- For information about optometry regulation, licensure and scope of practice in Alberta, [visit the ACO website](#) or email Dr. Kim Bugera at registrar@collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca
- For information about the optometry profession and eye care in Alberta, [visit the AAO website](#) or email AAO Manager of Communications Sabrina Licata at slicata@optometrists.ab.ca