

2023

ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE GOVERNMENT



ALBERTA college
of OPTOMETRISTS



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OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

VISION STATEMENT

Leading delivery of optometric care towards life-long clear, comfortable vision and improved quality of life for all Albertans.

MISSION STATEMENT

Innovative and compassionate guidance elevating optometric care for Albertans through competent, fair and collaborative leadership.

VALUES

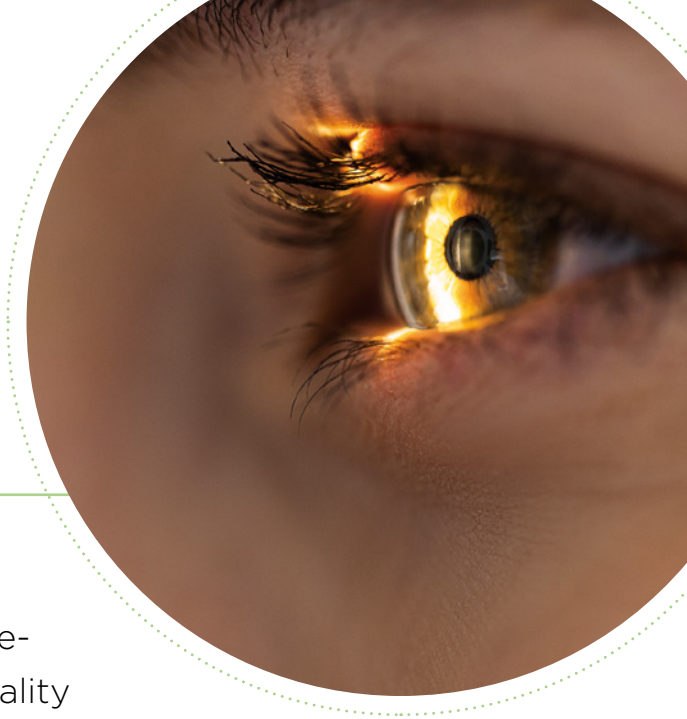
Visionary: Leaders for optometry

Compassion: Towards the public, our patients, our regulated members, and other stakeholders

Objectivity: Fair, ethical and unbiased decision-making

Integrity: Strong principles, including equity, diversity, and inclusivity, guide our decisions

Collaboration: Building strong relationships, learning from others and sharing our knowledge



2023 ACO COUNCIL



SEATED IN FRONT:

Dr. Clark Hyde (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)
Dr. Michelle Duke (PRESIDENT-ELECT)
Mrs. Kara Barker (PUBLIC MEMBER)
Mrs. Rhonda Camplin (PUBLIC MEMBER)
Dr. Jonathan Akle (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)

STANDING AT THE BACK:

Dr. Nasir Khan (PAST-PRESIDENT)
Dr. Michael Yu (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)
Dr. Kim Bugera (REGISTRAR)
Dr. Tom Wilk (PRESIDENT)
Dr. Michael Kreuzer (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our year started with a strategic planning session which saw the revision of the ACO's Guiding Principles and a renewed and re-worded commitment to serving the public interest in our unique manner. The organizational re-set continued with the integration of several new people in revised roles, most notably a new Registrar for the first time in over 20 years – Dr. Kim Bugera. Dr. Bugera brings diverse experience, energy, and innovative approaches to the ACO. It's with immense gratitude that we bid a fond farewell to Dr. Gordon Hensel, who officially retired from his role as ACO Registrar at the start of 2023.

Bill 46 and the associated revisions were relatively seamless at the ACO - we are fortunate to have a dynamic forward-thinking group that had already made many of the required changes, including the separation of College activities from those of our Association, amendments to regulatory documents including Bylaws, Regulations, and Standards of Practice, and others.

Collaboration with national and international regulatory organizations has been a key priority for our group, and our Council members attended learning sessions, leadership forums and discussion panels on emerging regulatory topics such as AI, telemedicine, and labour mobility. We have also been working closely with our national optometric regulatory agency and have been assisting in the ongoing development of the Canadian Board Exam which certifies optometrists across the country. Our innovative Continuing Competence Program has benefited from an alliance with a working group at the College of Physicians and Surgeons to continually develop and refine our process.

Over the years, many of our resources have been directed toward improving access to eye care for Albertans via optometric scope expansion. Our latest proposal is requesting that optometrists be given the authority to treat glaucoma and a common cataract surgery complication using three different laser procedures, and to be able to remove benign superficial skin lesions on and around the eyes. As always, we have taken the approach of educating and informing to demonstrate how these legislative changes would benefit Albertans. Our evidence-based proposal conclusively shows how this scope expansion would achieve many UCP mandates for healthcare reform, including improved urgent care access, reduced specialist wait times, and better rural support in a safe, responsible, and efficient manner. Work continues in pursuit of a successful outcome.

We look forward to the opportunity to serve and successfully navigate the challenges that lie ahead.

Respectfully submitted

Dr. Tom Wilk

PRESIDENT, ALBERTA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS, ACO



PUBLIC MEMBERS REPORT

Public Members are an important and indispensable component of the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) Council. We are appointed by the Minister of Health and provide valuable input and oversight into the college's policies and decisions. Our contributions help ensure public accountability.

Of all the mandates of the ACO, protecting the public interest is the most important. To that end, Public Members provide that perspective on behalf of all Albertans and the Alberta Government. With the proclamation of Bill 46, 50% of voting members of all health regulatory Councils must be Public Members.

In 2023, the government had three Public Members who were appointed to the ACO Council:

- Mrs. Kara Barker is a Crown Prosecutor with the Alberta Government specializing in Youth and Restorative Justice Practices which includes the Edmonton Drug Treatment Court.
- Mrs. Rhonda Camplin is a graduate of the University of Alberta, Faculty of Law, a partner of Francis Law in Calgary and duty counsel for Legal Aid Alberta.
- Dr. Sherri Chisan is the President and Director of Research at the University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills in St. Paul, Alberta.

Dr. Sherri Chisan's three year appointment came to an end in September of 2023. Due to a very busy business and personal life Dr. Chisan did not wish to let her name stand for reappointment for a second three year term.

The ACO Council provides appropriate leadership to the profession, and that the ACO Code of Ethics, ACO Standards of Practice, Guidelines to the ACO Standards of Practice and the ACO Clinical Practice Guidelines all provide appropriate guidance to Doctors of Optometry in the provision of vision care services.

We are also very excited to be a part of your scope of practice request to the Alberta Government as it will offer improved patient health outcomes, decreased systemic health costs and better access to vision care services to all Albertans – especially to those in remote and rural areas. 2023 was a year of modernization at the ACO office with the advent of a new continuing education tracking system called OE Tracker and the first public stakeholder consultation undertaken by the ACO. We look forward to the results being ready in 2024.

We thank the ACO Council and staff for welcoming us to the optometric profession and 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. We also look forward to meeting many of you at this year's (in-person) Annual General Meeting.

Respectfully submitted

Kara Barker, Rhonda Camplin and Sherri Chisan

PUBLIC MEMBERS, 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 four voting Public Council Members and seven Regulated Council Members (of which four are designated as voting and three are designated as non-voting including the Immediate Past-President). This 50-50 voting split conforms to the requirements of Bill 30 and ensures that the public is well protected.

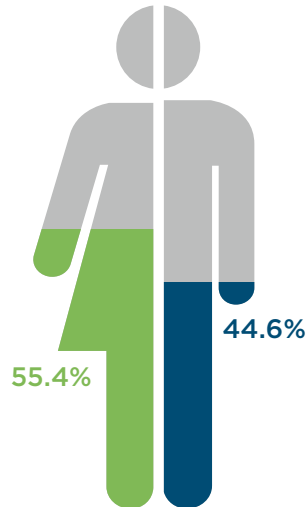
All college committees are governed by strict guidelines, Terms of Reference and operating policies as directed by the *Health Professions Act*, *Optometrists Profession Regulation*, ACO Bylaws and the ACO Policy Governance Manual. These guidelines, Terms of Reference and policies are reviewed on a regular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



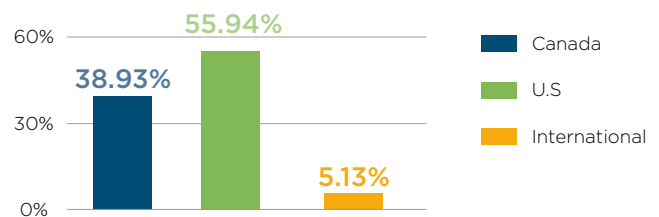
The ACO Policy Governance Manual is regularly updated to reflect changes to regulation and legislation affecting organizational structure and responsibilities such as those mandated by the passage of Bills 30 and 46. The revisions of the *Optometrist Profession Regulation*, the ACO Bylaws and the ACO Standards of Practice were all completed by late 2022 and continue to be reviewed on an annual calendar to remain current and appropriate.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

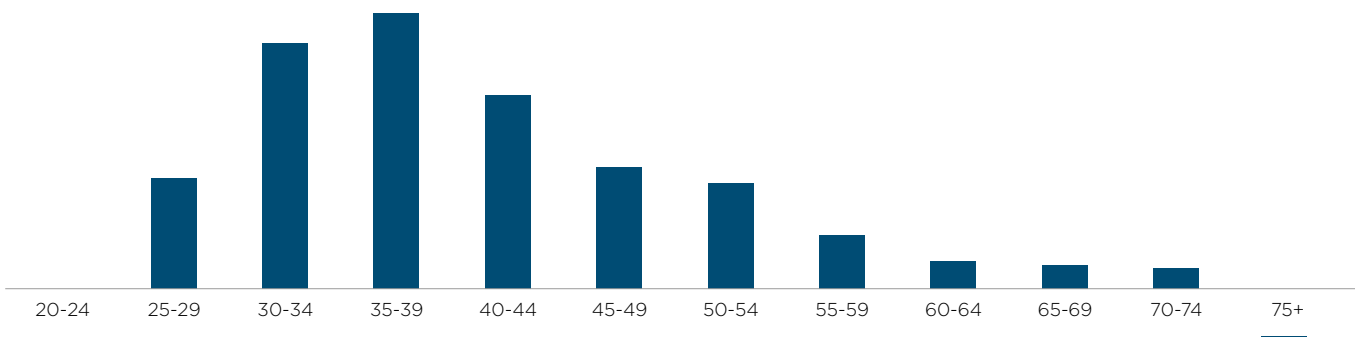
In 2023, the ACO had a total of 917 Regulated Members which is an increase of 2.8% from the previous year. Of this number, a total of 508 members were female and 409 were male.



The majority of optometrists in Alberta are trained in accredited Schools of Optometry in the United States (55.94%). 38.93% of Alberta optometrists received their training in Canada. The remaining 5.13% received training at International Schools of Optometry before returning to Alberta to practice



AGE RANGE OF MEMBERSHIP



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 2023, a total of 43 candidates challenged the ACO Jurisprudence Exam with an average pass

rate of 75.5%. As the pass mark is set at 70%, the 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 candidates passed the alternative ACO Jurisprudence Exam.

In summary, all complete registration applications received in 2023 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.

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) certified 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 to earn this designation. New applicants to the ACO are able to choose from a variety of certification course options (including an on-line certification course) to meet these registration requirements.

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.

Further information on the Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) entrance to practice exam, eligibility, exam dates and accommodations is available at www.oebc.ca.

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 world class

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 Canadian students are forced to pursue optometric education opportunities in the United States and abroad. The net effect is that we currently have more Canadian students enrolled in U.S. Schools of Optometry than in both Canadian Schools of Optometry combined.



ACO STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND 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 these services are provided. They are based on the best available and most current optometric and medical clinical evidence and research. In 2023, the committee continued to recommend updates to several Clinical Practice Guidelines to account for new technologies

and advances in vision care treatments and procedures.

All ACO standards and guidelines are also be used by the ACO in evaluating and assessing the competence and professional conduct of Regulated Members.

The Alberta College of Optometrists is very proud to be viewed as a leader in Canada in the development, revision and enforcement of vision care 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 they need to provide service to the public,
- Continually enhance the quality and delivery of optometric services, and,
- Ensure their 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 2023, a total of 102 chart reviews were conducted. An additional 12 reviews were tabled due to practitioner resignation, retirement or moving out-of-province. Of the 102 reviews conducted:

- 69 were deemed satisfactory.
- 27 were deemed satisfactory with minor compliance.
- 5 were deemed a failure with a follow-up assessment scheduled in 180 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.

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 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 2022

The complaint investigation which was being held in abeyance (until judicial proceedings within the jurisdiction where the alleged offences occurred were concluded) has been completed. It was determined that the complaint was fully adjudicated in the other jurisdiction and the Member's practice permit was suspended for five years given the Member's conduct constituted sexual misconduct.

The Hearing which was in the process of being scheduled has taken place, resulting in multiple findings of unprofessional conduct against the Member.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

In 2023, forty-four (44) new, formal complaints against Regulated Members of the ACO were received:

- Twenty-three (23) formal complaints were deemed vexatious or trivial and were dismissed.
- Eight (8) formal complaints were resolved by the ACO Complaints Director.

- Two (2) formal complaints were resolved through formal mediation between the optometrist and complainant.
- Eight (8) formal complaints were investigated and subsequently dismissed due to insufficient or no evidence of unprofessional conduct.
- One (1) complaint was investigated and resulted in a Member Undertaking Agreement between the Member and the ACO.

- One (1) complaint was investigated and subsequently referred to a Hearing Tribunal, which is in the process of being scheduled by the Hearings Director.
- One (1) formal complaint investigation is currently active.

No appeals of a complaint dismissals were received in 2023.

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, 2023, 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, 2023, 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. matter 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 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.



Chartered Professional Accountants

April 17, 2024
Edmonton, Alberta

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

| | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Current Assets | | |
| Cash | 1,087,712 | 1,235,391 |
| Term Deposits | 1,789,821 | 1,794,990 |
| Accounts receivable | 85,289 | 49,494 |
| Prepaid expenses | 80,371 | 62,283 |
| Total current assets: | 3,043,193 | 3,142,158 |
| Property and Equipment | 496,488 | 464,120 |
| Total assets: | 3,539,681 | 3,606,278 |

LIABILITIES

| Current Liabilities | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 41,601 | 78,572 |
| Members' due collected in advance | 1,012,100 | 1,227,050 |
| Total current liabilities: | 1,053,701 | 1,305,622 |

NET ASSETS

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Investment in Property and Equipment | 496,488 | 494,120 |
| Unrestricted | 1,989,492 | 1,836,536 |
| Net Assets: | 2,485,980 | 2,300,656 |
| Total Net Assets: | 3,539,681 | 3,606,278 |

REVENUES

| | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Member Dues | 978,650 | 1,019,650 |
| Application and Registration Fees | 33,075 | 32,800 |
| Professional Corporation Fees | 46,800 | 48,550 |
| Rental income | 11,760 | 0 |
| Interest Income | 114,987 | 6,456 |
| Hearing Tribunal Recoveries | 45,403 | 0 |

EXPENDITURES

| | 2022 | 2023 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Administrative and Executive | 456,591 | 882,136 |
| Amortization | 33,104 | 32,368 |
| College Committees and Meetings | 264,541 | 378,276 |
| Computer and IT Costs | 31,324 | 30,161 |
| Council | 81,067 | 90,094 |
| Legal Fees | 41,067 | 101,803 |
| Office Building Costs | 31,388 | 40,026 |

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The Statement of Financial Position is derived from audited financial statements, prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards. The preparation of this 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. GIC 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 always 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.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE GOVERNMENT



ALBERTA college
of OPTOMETRISTS

Dr. Kim Bugera, Registrar
#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