

# 2024

ANNUAL REPORT  
TO THE GOVERNMENT



ALBERTA college  
of OPTOMETRISTS



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## OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

### VISION STATEMENT

Protecting and fostering life-long, clear, comfortable vision and improved quality of life for the public by regulating the delivery of optometric care.



### MISSION STATEMENT

Compassionate and contemporary guidance elevating optometric care for the public through competent, fair and collaborative regulatory 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



## 2024 ACO COUNCIL



### LEFT TO RIGHT:

**Dr. Clark Hyde** (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)  
**Dr. Yogesh Patel** (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)  
**Dr. Michael Kreuzer** (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)  
**Mrs. Rhonda Camplin** (PUBLIC MEMBER)  
**Mrs. Kara Barker** (PUBLIC MEMBER)  
**Dr. Michael Yu** (REGULATED COUNCIL MEMBER)

**Dr. Michelle Duke** (PRESIDENT)  
**Dr. Jonathan Akle** (PRESIDENT-ELECT)  
**Dr. Kim Bugera** (REGISTRAR)  
**Dr. Tom Wilk** (PAST-PRESIDENT)

### MISSING FROM PHOTO:

**Mr. Bob Sprague** (PUBLIC MEMBER)

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We started the year as a Council with a high level strategic planning session, as a way to regroup and refocus our efforts for the upcoming term. We reviewed our Vision, Mission and Core Values, and strategically planned for potential opportunities and obstacles for optometric care in Alberta in the best interest of the public.

As a regulatory college, we recognize the importance of staying current with our registration, competency and continuing education systems. As new research emerges with respect to regulatory best practices and efficiencies, we are continuously reevaluating our own processes. We routinely attend both national and international regulatory conferences, and continue to build relationships with other optometric jurisdictions within Canada and throughout the global community.

We are thrilled to be working with the University of Waterloo and Mount Royal University towards a shared goal of Western Canada's first school of optometry. Unfortunately, many Canadian students are required to attend optometry schools outside of Canada as there are not enough seats within our country. This new development also ties in very closely with our efforts to redefine optometry within Alberta, as our current scope of practice no longer aligns with Albertan optometrists' skill sets. We look forward to continuing to work with the Alberta government to modernize optometry's scope of practice, so that highly trained optometrists can continue to work within Alberta's communities to provide quality, timely, and effective care for their patients.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to serve as President of the Alberta College of Optometrists.

Respectfully submitted

**Dr. Michelle Duke**

PRESIDENT, ALBERTA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS, ACO



## PUBLIC MEMBERS REPORT

Public Members play a vital and valued role on the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) Council. Appointed by the Minister of Health, we bring important public oversight and provide input into the development of policies and decisions that guide the College. Our role is key in supporting transparency and accountability to the public.

Among all the responsibilities entrusted to the ACO, safeguarding the public interest remains paramount. Public Members offer an essential perspective that represents the people of Alberta and aligns with the expectations of the Alberta Government. With the implementation of Bill 46, all health regulatory councils are now required to have Public Members comprise 50% of voting Council members.

In 2024, three Public Members were appointed to serve on the ACO council and one seat remained vacant awaiting government appointment:

- **Mrs. Kara Barker** is a Crown Prosecutor with Alberta Justice, with a specialization in Youth and Restorative Justice, including her work with the Edmonton Drug Treatment Court.
- **Mrs. Rhonda Camplin**, a University of Alberta Faculty of Law graduate, currently works with Legal Aid Saskatchewan.
- **Mr. Bob Sprague**, who holds degrees in pharmacy, business, and education, has served in senior roles with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services.

The ACO Council continues to provide strategic direction to the profession of optometry. Its oversight ensures that the Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, Guidelines to the Standards of Practice, and Clinical Practice Guidelines remain up to date and aligned with

best practices. This past year was no exception, as the Council led important updates to clinical and professional standards and reviewed related policies.

2024 was also a year of sustained advocacy and meaningful dialogue with government partners. The ACO actively engaged with the province on modernizing optometrists' scope of practice in Alberta. Aligning legislation with current training and the regulatory standards of other jurisdictions will support more efficient health service delivery, reduce wait times, and help retain skilled optometrists within Alberta. Similar initiatives in pharmacy and nurse practitioner roles show Alberta's leadership in this area.

We are especially encouraged by the Alberta Government's recent funding announcement supporting a feasibility study for a Western School of Optometry at Mount Royal University. Currently, Alberta students must leave the province to pursue optometric education, often attending the University of Waterloo or institutions in the U.S. A locally based school would help meet workforce needs and provide an accessible pathway to careers in optometry right here in Alberta.

We extend our sincere thanks to the ACO Council and staff for their warm welcome and collaboration. We are confident the Council will continue to meet its mandate of protecting the public and supporting the profession. We look forward to connecting with many of you at this year's in-person Annual General Meeting.

Respectfully submitted

**Kara Barker, Rhonda Camplin and  
Bob Sprague**

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 46 and ensures that the public is well protected.

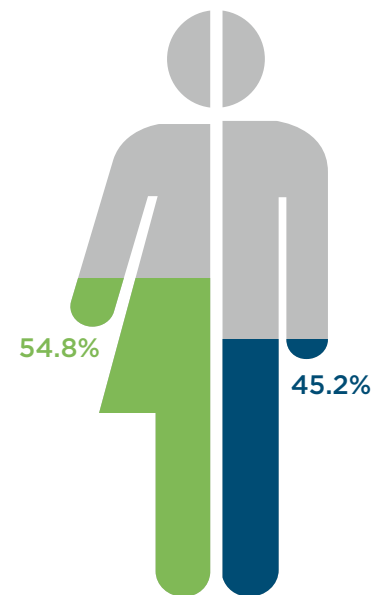
All college committees are governed by strict guidelines, Terms of Reference and operating policies as directed by the Health Professions Act, Optometrists Profession Regulation, ACO Bylaws and the ACO Policy Governance Manual. These guidelines, Terms of Reference and policies are reviewed on a regular 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 updated bimonthly to ensure the structure of the organization is in line with legislation affecting organizational structure and responsibilities, such as those mandated by the passage of Bill 46. The ACO Bylaws are reviewed annually to ensure they remain current and appropriate. The ACO Standards of Practice are updated as emerging technology and reliable up-to-date research continue to become available.

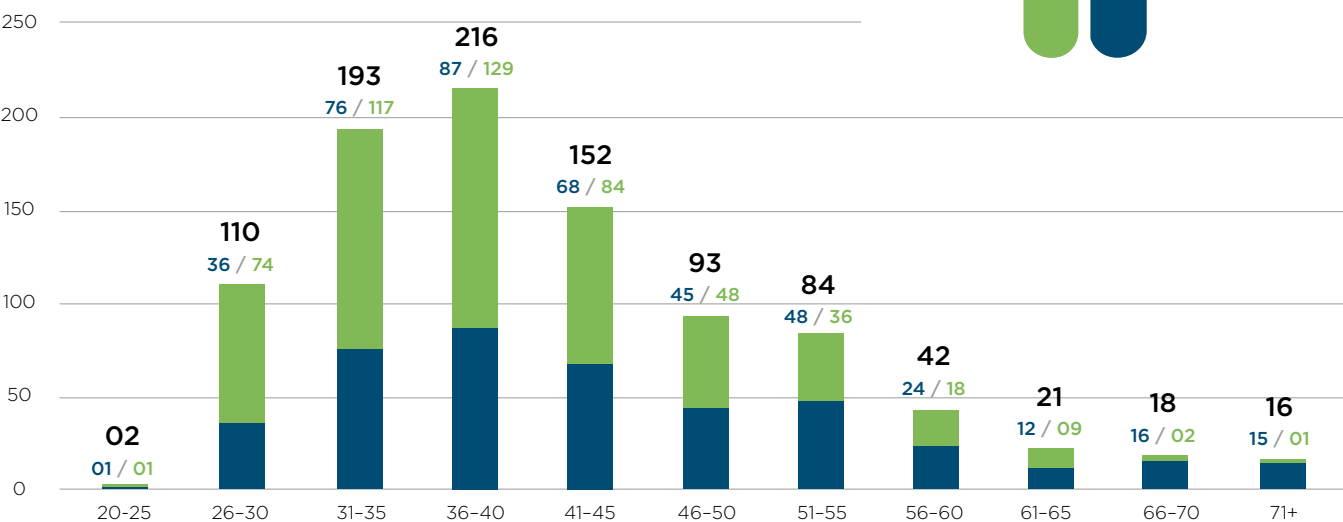


# REGISTRATION INFORMATION

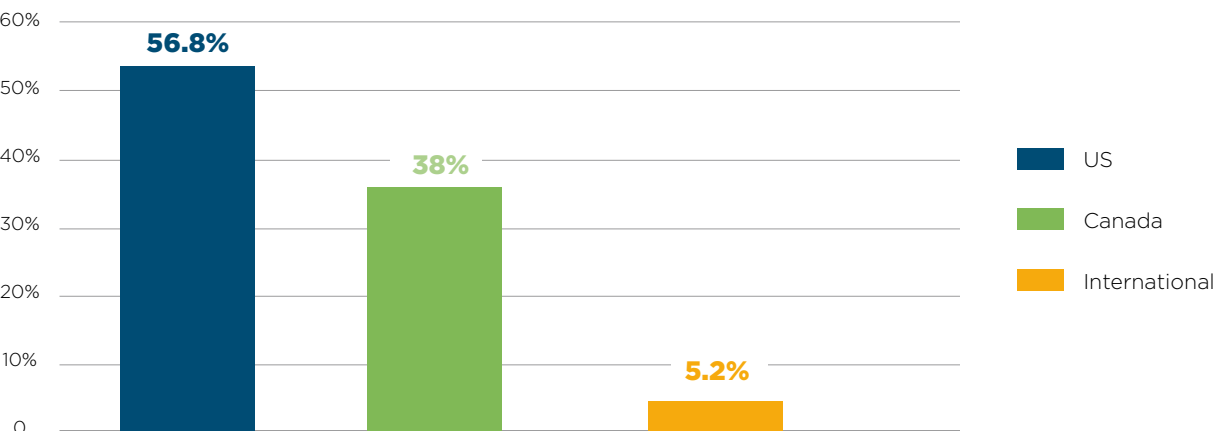
In 2024, the ACO had a total of 947 Regulated Members which is an increase of 3.4% from the previous year. Of this number, a total of 519 members (54.8%) were female and 428 members (45.2%) were male.



## AGE RANGE + GENDER OF MEMBERSHIP



538 members (56.8%) were U.S. trained, 360 members (38%) were Canadian trained, and 49 members (5.2%) were internationally trained.





## 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 were able to write the ACO Jurisprudence Exam in either Calgary or Edmonton on any weekday in 2024, and a total of 45 candidates challenged the ACO Jurisprudence Exam. The average mark was 76% and the range was 60% to 90%. As the

pass mark is set at 70%, the six 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. Those candidates passed the alternative ACO Jurisprudence Exam.

In summary, all complete registration applications received in 2024 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 (ACO) recognizes the Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) exam as the standard for entry-to-practice registration in Alberta. The OEBC provides a bilingual, psychometrically sound, and defensible assessment of the core competencies required to practice optometry in Canada. The examination includes both a written component and a clinical Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), which uses standardized patients to simulate real-life scenarios. All Canadian provinces accept the OEBC exam for initial licensure.



### ADVANCED SCOPE CERTIFICATION

Since December 31, 2018, it has been mandatory for all ACO Regulated Members to hold both Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agent (TPA) and Advanced Scope certifications. No exemptions or “grandfathering” were provided—every existing member was required to complete an accredited certification program and successfully pass a comprehensive final exam. New applicants to the ACO can choose from multiple certification options, including an online course, to fulfill this requirement as part of their registration process.

### LABOR MOBILITY

Under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), the ACO adheres to national labour mobility provisions by accepting applications from optometrists currently licensed and in good standing in any other Canadian province or territory.

For additional details on the OEBC entry-to-practice exam, including eligibility, scheduling, and accommodation options, please visit [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca).



## CANADIAN OPTOMETRY TRAINING PROGRAMS

### CANADIAN SCHOOLS OF OPTOMETRY

At present, Canada has two Schools of Optometry—located at the Universities of Waterloo and Montreal. These institutions continue to be the sole providers of optometric education within the country.

Students from both schools regularly complete clinical externships at optometry clinics across Alberta. The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) maintains strong and collaborative relationships with both institutions, helping to ensure that graduates receive the academic instruction and hands-on clinical training required to deliver high-quality, safe, and effective eye care immediately upon entering the profession.

Given that optometrists deliver the majority of primary vision care in Alberta, establishing a world-class Faculty of Optometry within one

of Alberta's leading post-secondary institutions would align closely with the strategic objectives of Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Health, and Alberta Health Services. The ACO remains committed to working with government, the public, and other partners to help realize this vision.

With limited capacity at the Canadian schools, many aspiring optometrists are compelled to seek education outside the country. As a result, more Canadian students are currently enrolled in U.S.-based Schools of Optometry than in both Canadian programs combined. Recently the Government of Alberta committed a \$300,000 grant to Mount Royal University to explore the feasibility of a School of Optometry in Alberta. A similar project is underway in New Brunswick. This could see the potential of more locally trained optometrists in Canada, helping to fortify workforce demands of the growing and aging population.

## ACO STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND CODE OF ETHICS

The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) Council and the ACO Standards of Practice Committee continue to regularly review and revise the ACO's foundational documents, including the **Standards of Practice, Guidelines to the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and Clinical Practice Guidelines**. These ongoing updates reflect the rapid pace of advancements in optometric science, diagnostic and therapeutic technologies, as well as evolving legislative and regulatory frameworks.

These standards and guidelines provide comprehensive direction on the range of services Alberta's Doctors of Optometry are authorized to perform and the expectations around how those services are delivered. All content is grounded in the most up-to-date clinical evidence, research, and best practices in optometric and medical care.

In addition to guiding professional practice, these documents form the basis by which the ACO evaluates the competence, ethical conduct, and ongoing performance of its Regulated Members. They are critical tools for supporting safe, effective, and accountable patient care.

Throughout 2024, the ACO continued to refine and enhance various clinical and ethical guidance documents. Notably, the **Infection Prevention and Control Policy** was further aligned with the latest updates from Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, reflecting current best practices in infection risk reduction. Several **Clinical Practice Guidelines** were also updated to reflect new procedures, technologies, and treatment protocols relevant to modern optometric care.

The ACO has made strides in transparency and accessibility by improving online navigation to these documents through its website, including interactive formats and searchable standards for both members and the public. These updates reinforce the ACO's commitment to remaining a national leader in the creation, revision, and enforcement of evidence-informed practice standards and clinical guidelines in vision care.



# 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 2024, 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 Members were 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 most Albertans report positive interactions with their Doctor of Optometry, occasional concerns or disputes can arise. The Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) is committed to administering a fair, transparent, and accountable complaints process, as outlined in the *Health Professions Act* (HPA).

### GENERAL OVERVIEW

Under the HPA, the **Complaints Director** is responsible for managing all formal, written, and signed complaints submitted to the ACO regarding the conduct of its Regulated Members.

Upon receiving a complaint, the Complaints Director has several options for action. These may include immediate dismissal (in cases where the complaint is considered trivial or vexatious), mediation (to encourage communication and resolution between the parties), or launching a formal investigation.

Once an investigation is complete, the Complaints Director may determine that the complaint should be dismissed, referred to a **Hearing Tribunal** if there is sufficient evidence of unprofessional conduct, or resolved through a **Member Undertaking**—an agreement that includes specified conditions which the member must meet to avoid referral to a tribunal.

In cases where a complaint is dismissed, the complainant has the right to appeal the decision. This is done by submitting a request to the **ACO Hearings Director**, who will convene a **Complaint Review Committee (CRC)** to review the complaint, the process, and all associated documentation. After its review, the CRC may uphold the dismissal, recommend further investigation, or refer the matter to a Hearing Tribunal.

### SUMMARY OF ACO COMPLAINTS FOR 2024

#### CARRY-OVER FROM 2023

The complaint investigation which was active has been completed, resulting in a dismissal of the complaint.

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 2024

In 2024, forty-six (46) new, formal complaints against Regulated Members of the ACO were received:

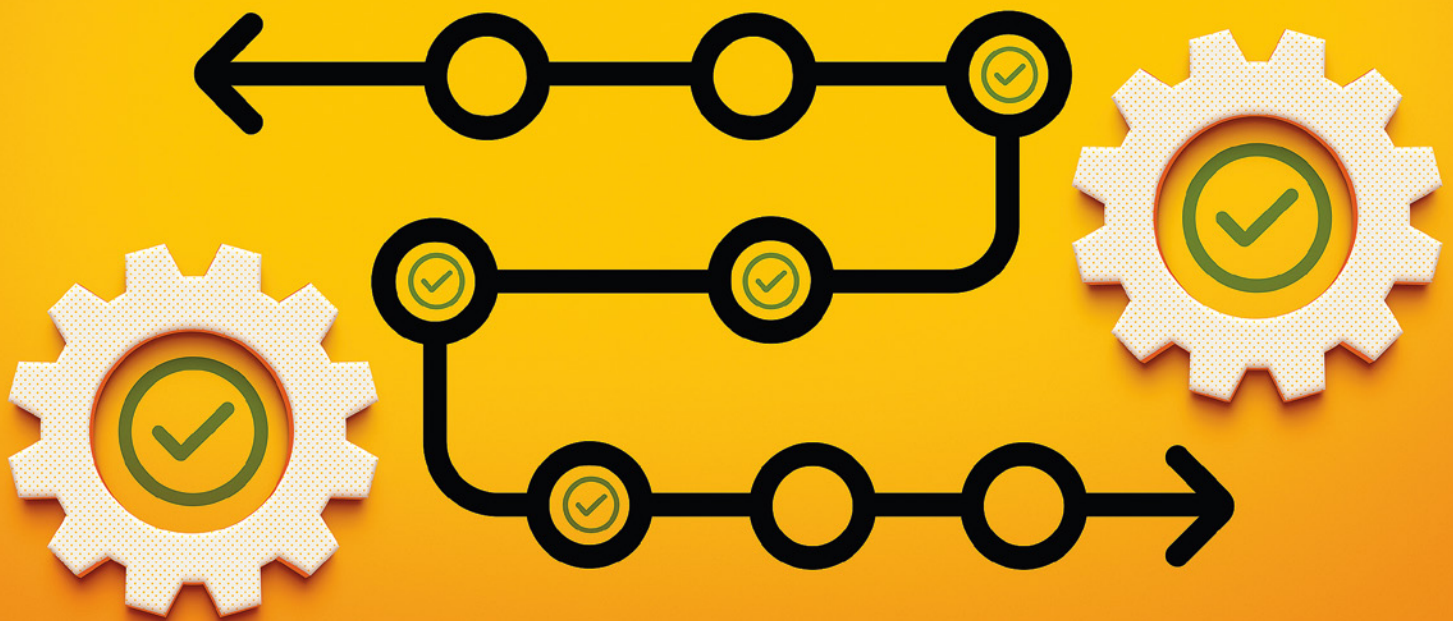
- Twenty-three (23) formal complaints were deemed vexatious or trivial and were dismissed.
- Twelve (12) formal complaints were resolved by the ACO Complaints Director.
- Five (5) formal complaints were investigated and subsequently dismissed due to insufficient or no evidence of unprofessional conduct.
- One (1) complaint was investigated and resulted in a Member Undertaking Agreement between the Member and the ACO.

- Four (4) complaints were investigated and subsequently referred to the ACO Hearings Director for Hearings, which are in the process of being scheduled.
- One (1) formal complaint investigation is currently active.

Two appeals of a complaint dismissals were received in 2024. One dismissal was upheld by the CRC, and the other complaint dismissal is still under CRC review.

**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, 2024, 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, 2024, 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.

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT, continued

### *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.

**Partners**

Brenda G. Pisko\* CA  
Michael J. Miskiw\* CA  
\*Professional Corporation

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT, continued**

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.

June 18, 2025  
Edmonton, Alberta

*Pisko & Miskiw LLP*

Chartered Professional Accountants

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

### ASSETS

	2023	2024
Current Assets	\$	\$
Cash	1,235,391	1,106,970
Term Deposits	1,794,990	1,814,021
Accounts receivable	49,494	50,063
Prepaid expenses	62,283	85,759
Total current assets:	3,142,158	3,056,813
Property and Equipment	464,120	450,376
Loan Receivable	-	35,000
Total assets:	3,606,278	3,542,189

### LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	78,572	132,881
Members' due collected in advance	1,227,050	1,267,850
Total current liabilities:	1,305,622	1,400,731

### NET ASSETS

Investment in Property and Equipment	464,120	450,376
Unrestricted	1,836,536	1,691,082
Net Assets:	2,300,656	2,141,458
Total Net Assets:	3,606,278	3,542,189



## REVENUES

	2023	2024
Member Dues	1,019,650	1,243,450
Application and Registration Fees	32,800	37,900
Professional Corporation Fees	48,550	53,450
Rental income	0	14,994
Interest Income	6,456	33,952
Hearing Tribunal Recoveries	0	26,000

## EXPENDITURES

	2023	2024
Administrative and Executive	882,136	933,108
Amortization	32,368	25,556
College Committees and Meetings	378,276	610,280
Computer and IT Costs	30,161	34,593
Council	90,094	93,440
Legal Fees	101,803	129,673
Office Building Costs	40,026	22,814

# NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The **Statement of Financial Position** is based on audited financial statements prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards. To ensure alignment and accuracy, ACO office staff carefully determine the key information to include so that the statement presents a consistent and fair summary of the audited financials.

Copies of the **audited financial statements** for the Alberta College of Optometrists (ACO) are available upon request by contacting the ACO office directly.

The College records its financial assets and liabilities initially at fair value. For financial instruments not subsequently measured at fair value, the initial value is adjusted for transaction costs directly related to acquiring the instrument. All financial assets and liabilities are then measured at amortized cost. These

include items such as cash, term deposits, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and accrued liabilities.

Fees collected from ACO Regulated Members—such as the Practice Permit, Professional Corporation Permit, and registration fees—are set and approved by the ACO Council. The College invests in GIC Term Deposits with durations of up to five years. Interest rates vary annually based on market trends, while the original principal is fully protected.

The ACO follows a structured **risk management framework** to assess, monitor, and address the primary risks associated with its financial instruments. These include exposure to credit risk, liquidity risk, and interest rate risk. The College’s exposure to these risks has remained stable and unchanged from the previous year.





**2024** ANNUAL REPORT  
TO THE GOVERNMENT



ALBERTA college  
of OPTOMETRISTS

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