

With this Annual Report, the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) aims to share highlights from a year that we expected would be a celebration of optometry but because of the COVID-19 pandemic, became one of the most significant practice disruptors the membership has ever experienced. As CAO President Dr. Michael Nelson noted, "If there was a silver lining in all of this for me, it was witnessing how the optometric community rallied to support one another. Whether that support is for those we work with in our own practices or those in other practices, whether near or far, we genuinely seemed to be there for one another." Despite a difficult year, CAO endeavoured to meet the [mission](#) on your behalf.

Strategic Directions

ADVOCACY

- [Advocacy one pager](#) infographic was redeveloped and endorsed by the Canadian Council of the Blind, Canadian Ophthalmological Society, Diabetes Canada and Fighting Blindness Canada.
- [Submission of Pre-Budget Consultation Brief](#) with recommendations to improve eye health research, awareness, and support for ocular telemedicine.
- CAO advocacy helps trigger Health Canada's Tier Assignment Committee to address [Timolol shortages](#).
- Extensive advocacy efforts to support ODs during COVID included: meetings with Finance officials, providing regular economic assessments of Government support programs, and a [submission](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on optometric practice to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.
- Leadership on [HEAL](#) to advocate for [post-COVID recovery](#), [support for front line health care workers](#), regular bi-weekly meetings with staff of the Health Minister and a [budget submission](#).
- Work within the Extended Health Professionals Coalition (EHPC) to ensure that health care providers [be recognized as essential workers](#) and receive access to vaccines during the pandemic and asking the banks for [student debt relief](#).
- Engaged member and industry participation on a Task Force for Online Prescriptions to explore options for a mechanism for safe and effective prescription verification of online sales of contact lenses and glasses.
- Participation on a Non-Insured Health Benefits Directorate Technical Working Group to improve service delivery by Express Scripts Canada (ESC).

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION

- Launched [Don't Lose Sight](#), a multi-media digital and traditional campaign to modernize the insurance industry based on the recommendations of the [Best Practices Guide to Vision Care Benefits](#).
- Collaborated with the Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) to modernize vision benefits.
- Developed a series of "[My Optometrist Found](#)" videos as part of the [Get Eyewise](#) campaign.
- Partnered with the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) on an [animated video](#) for glaucoma awareness and education, which emphasised the importance of co-management of the disease.
- Presented Eric Gionet (New Brunswick) with the prestigious 2020 Vision Champion Award.
- Contributed to a study commissioned by the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) that also examined the impact of COVID-19.
- CAO President Michael Nelson shared his insights with the public on a number of topics, including [screen time and children's vision](#), the [impact of COVID-19 on optometry](#) and [what's new at the CAO](#).



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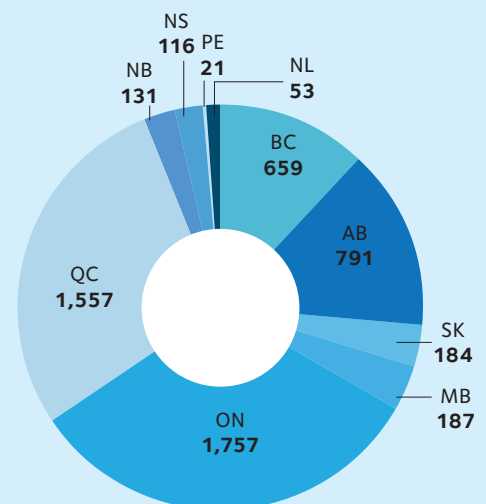
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

- During the first wave of COVID-19, CAO provided members with daily updates, served as a [clearinghouse for Phase 1 return to work info](#), developed a [TeleOptometry Guide](#), and organized webinars on a variety of topics.
- Moved [Contact](#) (CAO's primary member information vehicle) from a monthly to weekly format to provide more timely updates.
- Welcomed **533** student members from the Schools of Optometry at the Universities of Montreal and Waterloo, as well as some American schools.
- The annual OLF went virtual, and featured both national and international panellists guiding discussion on topics that included the WHO's [World Report on Vision](#) and its implications for Canada, scope of practice, and access to care.
- Published the [Low Vision Guideline](#) in the [Canadian Journal of Optometry](#).
- Launched the CCOA [On-Demand Program](#) as a new option for Optometric Assistants to enroll at any time and move through it at their own pace.
- **1847** CCOAs; **229** new graduates
- Began development of [CAO Learning](#), an online platform for ODs to access COPE-accredited CE.
- Improved the [Vision at Work](#) customer experience through the creation of an online portal and a complete change in invoicing processes.

TECHNOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Established an AI Task Force, which developed a [Position Statement on Diabetic Retinopathy and Artificial Intelligence](#) screening.

Membership



[CAO Council](#)



[Summary Financial Statements](#)