



2026 CAO Optometric Leaders' Forum

Topic: From Clinical Chairs to Policy Table: Building the next generation of advocates

Agenda

Time	Schedule	Speakers/Description
Thursday January 22		
18:00 – 19:00	Cocktails	
19:00 – 21:30	Dinner & guest speaker <i>Getting your topic on the political agenda and developing champions for your cause</i>	<p>Peter Cleary- Principal –Santis Health & former political staffer having spent a decade supporting five cabinet ministers, in three different governments, including supporting two Health Ministers at both the federal and provincial level.</p> <p>Avis Favaro - Canada's longest-serving television Medical Correspondent formely with CTV</p> <p><i>This panel will cover a range of topics, including understanding government priorities and aligning your issues with them, integrating your issues when they are not a government priority, and building champions and collaborating with elected officials to advance your cause.</i></p>
Friday January 23		
7:30 - 8:30	Breakfast	
8:30 - 8:35	Welcome and Introduction	Dr. Allison Scott
8:35 - 8:40	Comments by the facilitator and housekeeping	Dr. Surjinder Sahota
8:40 - 9:10	Data for Advocacy	Marcel Saulnier – Past Associate Assistant Deputy Minister for the Strategic Policy Branch of Health Canada.

		<p>Glenn Brimacombe – Director Policy and Public Affairs – Canadian Psychological Association</p> <p>Dr. Mark Eltis - President College of Optometrists of Ontario</p> <p>Dr. Bronwyn Mulherin – New Brunswick Association of Optometrists</p> <p><i>This panel will discuss what data is needed to move forward advocacy objectives. A discussion on available data and gaps in data will be explored.</i></p>
9:10 - 9:30	Q&A for panelists	
9:30 - 9:40	A word from Johnson & Johnson Vision Care	<p>Marcus (Savoie) Bortolan General Manager - Vision Care Canada</p>
9:40 - 10:20	How to move forward your objectives with government ministries	<p>Dr. Brendan Carr – Past President & CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, William Osler Health System, and Island Health in British Columbia</p> <p>Dr. Evelyn Lo – President of B.C. Doctors of Optometry</p> <p>Me Maryse Nolin – Executive Director Association of Optometrists of Quebec</p> <p>Dr. Sheldon Pothier- Registrar Nova Scotia College of Optometry</p> <p><i>This panel will discuss concrete successes and challenges when moving forward their objectives with provincial ministries. Former senior level bureaucrat will provide feedback and insight.</i></p>
10:20 - 10:40	Q&A with panelists	

10:40 - 11:00	Break	
11:00 - 11:10	A word from Alcon	Vanessa Johari Hansen , Country Business Unit Head at Alcon Canada Gordon Petrovic , Market Access Head, Pharma at Alcon Canada
11:10-11:15 Transition in small group	Instructions for break-out group	Dr. Surjinder Sahota
11:15-11:45	Mobilize your membership Workshop	Small groups will discuss look at what works in engaging membership, what is needed to support engagement, and how are we engaging students?
11:45-12:15	Sharing the discussion	Groups with debrief and share their discussion on membership engagement
12:15-13:15	Lunch	
13:20-13:30	A word from Bausch+Lomb	Joanne Gourgouvelis : National Medical Affairs Lead at Bausch + Lomb
13:30-14:00	National Issues: update on Bill C-284 National strategy for eye care	The CAO will update the group on both the CAO submission and that of our Vision Partners' coalition and discuss the importance of our united advocacy efforts for the next 5 years.
14:05-14:55	Breakout groups (chose one) 1. Public education & awareness 2. Professional education outreach	Details: - What worked/what didn't/how we measured it" spotlights from provincial PR (e.g., bus campaign, social media). -What else can we do- on our own, together? -Who is teaching med students, family medicine residents, and allied health; capture effective formats and gaps. -What else can we do- on our own, together?

	<p>3. Federal/provincial knowledge transfer</p> <p>4. Research & data</p> <p>The CAO is proposing the establishment of a national vision health surveillance system which would act as a repository of data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Epidemiology of Eye Disease ○ Access to primary, secondary, tertiary and rehabilitative vision care ○ Health human resources 	<p>-Share provincial success stories (ex: indigenous health in BC, school exams in Quebec...)</p> <p>-What can we learn from these examples</p> <p>-What else can we do- on our own, together?</p> <p>-How can optometrists contribute to this goal? Discuss the benefits and challenges of creating an optometry-specific database made up of pooled data from clinics nationwide. What is needed to make it a reality? (resources, \$'s, technical/legal requirements...)</p> <p>-How can we assess the level of access to vision care on a national basis and at a granular level, including in indigenous communities?</p> <p>-What tools do we have to anticipate the supply needs of optometrists in Canada?</p> <p>-How can we incentivize optometrists to practice in rural regions?</p>
15:05-15:15	A word from EssilorLuxottica	Simon Robert : Senior Director, Corporate Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, EssilorLuxottica
15:15-16:00	Presentation on discussions	Each group will present on the discussions regarding the advocacy needs for each topic
16:00-16:30	Open Forum	Facilitator, speakers and panelists
16:30-16:40	Wrapping up the day	Dr. Allison Scott
17:30-19:30	<i>Closing Reception</i>	