



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 25, 2012
College of Opticians of British Columbia

Response to September 24, 2012 CBC News Go Public

Vancouver – On September 24, 2012 CBC News *Go Public* published a story about the B.C. Ministry of Social Development’s optical subsidies for low income B.C. residents under the age of 19. The College of Opticians of British Columbia (the “College”) would like to take this opportunity to clarify some aspects of this CBC News *Go Public* segment and to inform British Columbia’s healthcare consumers about safe vision care.

The College is a regulatory organization that assures the public an Optician is properly trained and will serve healthcare consumers ethically and competently within a defined standard of care. As regulated health professionals, Opticians are highly trained to provide healthcare consumers with quality eyewear. While the College supports consumer choice, our mandate is public protection.

It is important for B.C.’s healthcare consumers, especially children, to get proper eyewear from a regulated health professional because vision health is critical to a child’s development. It is the duty of Opticians to improve the health and well-being of their patients. Purchasing prescription eyewear from unregulated providers, like online sellers, brings with it a range of risks. Some of these risks relate to the health of the eye and some to the effectiveness of the eyewear. Improperly fitted eyewear from unregulated providers can interfere with a child’s ability to see, causing learning disabilities, impaired depth perception, blurred vision, falls, worsened near or far-sightedness and possible irreversible vision impairment.

“Most Opticians offer eyewear to low income B.C. residents at the subsidized rate so that these patients do not have to pay extra and to ensure that their eyewear are correctly made and meets the College’s standard of care,” says Lutz Sprecher, Vice-Chair of the College. “B.C. healthcare consumers who are looking for these Opticians can search on the College’s online registry at www.cobc.ca. The registry is current and allows consumers to identify and choose the services of a certified and regulated health professional.”

The B.C. government also helps low-income families get proper eyewear through the B.C. Healthy Kids Program and covers eye examinations through Medical Services Plan premium assistance for children under the age of 19.

The College was established in 1994 and has a duty to serve and protect the public, as well as to exercise its powers and fulfill its responsibilities in the public interest. You can find out more about the College and services and duties of Opticians at www.cobc.ca.

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