

Regulating and Improving the
Practice of Opticians to Ensure
Quality Professional Care for the
Consumers of British Columbia.

2008/09 COLLEGE *of* OPTICIANS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
ANNUAL REPORT





COLLEGE *of* OPTICIANS
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Our Mission

The College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) is charged with protecting the public interest in the regulation of the profession of opticianry, as directed by the *Health Professions Act*, the *Opticians' Regulations* and *COBC Bylaws*. The COBC is responsible for the administration of the Act and accompanying regulations and it is accountable to the public through its board.

The mission of the COBC is to ensure British Columbia opticians provide safe and effective care to help people achieve better vision.

The COBC is responsible for:

- ▶ Assessment, registration and licensing of all opticians and contact lens fitters in B.C.
- ▶ Interpretation of the *Health Professions Act*, the *Opticians Regulation* and the *COBC Bylaws*
- ▶ Public and registrant complaints and inquiries
- ▶ Establishment of standards of practice and guidelines

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Chair's Message	12	Quality Assurance
3	Registrar's Message	14	Examinations
4	Governance	15	Administration
6	2008/09 Milestones	17	Financial Management
7	Registration		
10	Complaints Resolution		Attached - Audited Financial Statements

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING | November 1, 2009 | Delta Hotel, 4331 Dominion Street, Burnaby, BC

This 2008/2009 annual report presents highlights of initiatives in the College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) fiscal year April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009.



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Kent Ashby, Chair

This is my second year serving as Chair of the College board after several years as a director. I continue to be impressed by the willingness of opticians to volunteer and dedicate their time to working with the College for the advancement of the profession of opticianry and for the benefit of the public. Many more opticians also work with advocacy organizations which also have an interest in benefiting the public.

Members of the COBC board and committees give their time and talents, working many many hours that few are aware of or recognize. I want to thank all these skilled professionals for their efforts on behalf of the profession and the public. We could not function without them and we honour their commitment and labours. I'd like to encourage involvement of all opticians at some point in their career.

As you know the obligations of the College, as the regulator of the practice of opticianry in British Columbia, involve applying and seeking enforcement of the law, working to advance the public interest to receive quality health care, and to provide transparency and information to opticians and the public. The College serves an important role that is distinctively different from a professional association. Professional associations advocate for the profession, which may well benefit the public. The College's mandate is the reverse. It is to protect the public interest in the practice of the profession - as a health care profession commonly working in conjunction with other health care professionals in the eye care continuum. The public benefits (as must the profession) from having access to health care services of highly skilled health professionals who are matched to their needs.

Opticians are also in the forefront of working to eliminate barriers and differences between provinces with standards, practices, requirements of education, continuing education and registration. The COBC is a national leader in this. For more than six years (well in advance of recent labour mobility laws), optician regulators from across Canada have been improving the right and ability of opticians to move between provinces with fewer barriers. Substantial work has gone into establishing national standards for education, national exams, and mutually recognized credentials. We are also working on a broad education campaign to inform and educate the public about opticians and that they are regulated (by the College) health care professionals. By working with other provincial regulators and other national organizations the College is able to leverage skills and resources to coordinate with others, avoid duplication of efforts, and establish best practices - which benefits all stakeholders by being more efficient and cost effective.

In short the College is in the forefront ensuring that British Columbians have access to opticians who provide a high standard of care, and that they have the knowledge and confidence to turn to their licensed optician as part of their health care options in the eye care continuum. Further, while in these challenging times it is even more important to avoid waste and inefficiency, the College continues to fulfill its mandate effectively while benefitting from the ongoing efforts to operate efficiently.



REGISTRAR'S MESSAGE

Nick Atkinson, Registrar

To address the changing needs of the public, the College has embarked on a number of notable initiatives in the past year. The 2008/09 report on the activities of the College of Opticians of British Columbia highlights a busy year for the COBC as it strives for innovation and collaboration with other organizations.

In fulfilling a commitment to the Trade Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) and the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT), British Columbia became the first province to move towards full labour mobility for all trades and professions. In support of the labour market programming in B.C., the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development has provided financial assistance to the College to implement an Online Assessment of International and Out-of-Province Applicants. This significant project is an effort to enable both the British Columbia and Alberta optician regulatory bodies to work together to meet the challenges of streamlining the registration process. This collaborative effort will result in a transparent and accessible process for applicants outside Canada or between the two provinces and ensure a solid supply of skilled opticians to meet the growing vision health care demands of the B.C. public. The COBC initiatives also focus on the development and maintenance of consistent national standards for admission to the profession that form a basis of foreign qualification recognition that is timely, transparent and fair.

The COBC has partnered with other Canadian opticians regulatory organizations to educate and raise awareness among the public about the role of opticians. This cooperation with the other Canadian opticianry regulatory organizations will enable the COBC to develop consistent professional messaging that informs the public about the standard of care and the accountability they can expect, resulting in an increased public confidence with the title "optician" and an understanding of the range of vital vision services opticians provide. Joint initiatives with Canadian regulators and other ophthalmic stakeholders allows the College to quickly respond and adapt to changes in opticians practice environments and use emerging technologies that will benefit the public of BC. In such rapidly evolving times, particularly with the non traditional supply of ophthalmic products and services, the initiatives of the COBC will ensure the public are able to identify appropriately trained and registered professionals and fully understand the importance of maintaining periodic, safe and effective vision care.

I would like to recognize the commitment that BC opticians continue to demonstrate in maintaining high standards of public protection and accountability. BC opticians quickly resolve public complaints that are addressed to the College and brought to their attention. The drop in complaints can be directly attributed to the COBC quality assurance program and the willingness of opticians to adhere to the COBC standards of practice. I would also like to recognize the commitment and efforts of the College's many volunteers for their contribution to advancing the profession and protecting the public. Opticians continue to enhance the lives of British Columbians by helping them see better.

GOVERNANCE

The College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) is the regulatory body established to govern the practice of opticianry in British Columbia under the Health Professions Act. The COBC is responsible for the administration of the Act and accompanying regulations and it is accountable to the public through its board.

As a self-regulating profession, the COBC is governed by a Board of Directors composed of elected and appointed members. Of the 10 board members, six are elected from the profession and four are appointed by government. Each board member serves a three-year term starting at the beginning of the calendar year. The board operates on a policy governance model framework. A policy governance board is only involved in governing the College through policy, while the administration is responsible for operations.

The primary duty of the board of the College is ensuring that the vision needs of the public of British Columbia are met by BC opticians through safe and effective means. In the course of performing its duties and exercising its powers under the Health Professions Act and other enactments, the board defines the strategic goals and objectives of the College and forecasts the long-term needs of the public.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE 2008/09 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR - KENT ASHBY, PUBLIC MEMBER (APPOINTED)

Mr. Ashby retired this year as legal counsel to The University of British Columbia. Mr. Ashby holds a Masters of Law with Honours from the University of Sydney Law School in Australia, a Bachelor of Law from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto and a Bachelor of Arts from University of Alberta. Mr. Ashby's expertise in business law has involved high technology, corporate governance, conflict of interest, policy development, and legislative research and analysis. He has also completed the Foundations of Administrative Justice course, developed by the BC Council for Administrative Tribunals.

Term Start Date: April 1, 2008 Term End Date: May 6, 2010

VICE-CHAIR (ENDED 12/31/2008) - DAVID NELSON, DISTRICT 1 (ELECTED)

Contact Lents Fitter

Mr. Nelson has been in the optical field for over 25 years, and has completed the OAC/NAIT program in dispensing and contact lenses. He is a member of the Dispensing Opticians Association of BC, the Opticians Association of Canada and the Association of Sight Testing Opticians of BC. He has also served on the Douglas College advisory committee and has completed courses at the Justice Institute of BC, including administrative justice.

Term Start Date: January 1, 2006 Term End Date: December 31, 2008

VICE-CHAIR (STARTED 01/01/2009) - STEPHANIE WEIR, DISTRICT 2 (ELECTED)

Contact Lents Fitter

Ms. Weir has been an Optician in Victoria for over twenty-four years and is presently sitting her second term on the Board of the COBC. Ms. Weir has successfully completed both her Certificate and Diploma in Business Administration at the University of Victoria.

Term Start Date: January 2, 2008 Term End Date: December 31, 2010

JOHN KERNS, DISTRICT 3 (ELECTED)

Contact Lents Fitter

Mr. Kerns has over 20 years of optical experience which includes both retail and manufacturing. He has also achieved a Masters Optician Certificate (U.S.) and the ABO/NCLE License (American Board of Opticians/National Contact Lens Examiners).

Term Start Date: January 1, 2007 Term End Date: December 31, 2009



INDERJIT BAMRAH, DISTRICT 1 (ELECTED)

Contact Lens Fitter

Mr. Bamrah has been an Optician for over thirty years and he received his Opticianry training at City and Islington College, London, England. He has served as a volunteer with various Opticianry associations, participated as an instructor in various opticians programs and have guest lectured at both provincial and national association educational programs.

Term Start Date: January 1, 2006 Term End Date: December 31, 2008

BRADFORD BENSON, DISTRICT 4 (ELECTED)

Dispensing Optician

Mr. Benson has been an Optician for 36 years and has had his own independent practice for 25 years. He has contributed to the profession of Opticianry by making continuing education more accessible for all BC opticians by spearheading the online continuing education campaign and making live broadcasting of seminars possible.

Term Start Date: January 1, 2008 Term End Date: December 31, 2010

LUTZ SPRECHER, DISTRICT 5 (ELECTED)

Contact Lens Fitter

Mr. Sprecher has been an independent full service Optician working in Surrey for almost 30 years. He has served as a volunteer Board member for the Dispensing Opticians Association of BC (DOABC), various charitable, strata, networking organizations and has worked as an education coordinator for the OAC/NAIT program.

Term Start Date: January 1, 2007 Term End Date: December 31, 2009

ELIZABETH A. CYTRA, PUBLIC MEMBER (APPOINTED)

Ms. Cytra is a retired legal administrator and since retiring has devoted herself to serving her community. She has a Professional Manager designation from the Canadian Institute of Management as well as a diploma in Financial Management from BCIT. Ms. Cytra is a former Trail City Councilor, a past President of the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, and served five years on the Trail Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Cytra is a member of Rotary International - giving her time and energies to raising funds for various humanitarian projects, both in the local and global community. She was Governor of Rotary International in 2007-2008.

Term Start Date: October 3, 2008 Term End Date: May 6, 2012

MARY JANE STENBERG, PUBLIC MEMBER (APPOINTED)

Ms. Stenberg has a Masters Degree in Leadership and Training and is currently the External Affairs Advisor, Office of the President for Kwantlen University College. She brings to the Board more than 23 years of executive and management knowledge and expertise, which includes being the former owner and CEO of Stenberg College.

Term Start Date: February 1, 2007 Term End Date: February 24, 2009 (Resigned)

JUNE BARENS, PUBLIC MEMBER (APPOINTED)

June Barens was the Director of Programs for the John Howard Society and a member of the BC Parole Board (Tribunal). She is a member of the BC Joint Family Court and Youth Justice Committee and a member of the White Rock City Social Planning Council. In the past, she was involved in the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations; the Canadian Progress Club; and the Addiction Research Foundation. In 2001, Ms. Barens received an Award for Public Service for work with Ministry of Children, Family and Development.

Term Start Date: October 3, 2008 Term End Date: May 6, 2011

RAHEEM SAVJA, DISTRICT 1 (ELECTED)

Contact Lens Fitter

Raheem Savja graduated with a BSc degree in Cell and Developmental Biology from UBC in 1994 and went on to pursue an MSc degree in cancer cell research. In 1996, Mr. Savja became a licensed optician/contact lens fitter and was promoted to manager. He is currently a manager at Pearle Vision. Mr. Savja has been an examiner for the COBC since 2000, the vice chair of the College of Opticians of BC Inquiry Committee since 2003 and is presently serving as treasurer for the Opticians of British Columbia (OBC).

Term Start Date: January 1, 2009 Term End Date: December 31, 2011

DIETER SAXER, DISTRICT 1 (ELECTED)

Contact Lens Fitter

Dieter Saxer has been working in the eyewear industry for over 27 years and was trained in Switzerland with a Lehrmeister Degree. He has served as a volunteer Board member and past president for the DOABC.

Term Start Date: January 1, 2009 Term End Date: December 31, 2011

2008/09 MILESTONES

April 2008 - the administration attended the “Solutions for Access” conference held by the Honourable Colin Hansen, Minister of Economic Development. The purpose of the conference was to bring together British Columbia and Alberta regulatory authorities, post secondary institutions, government representatives and other key stakeholders to discuss labour mobility and improving access to regulated professions for internationally trained professionals. The COBC and College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) started discussions on implementing an online Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) examination to streamline the registration process.

May 2008 - the COBC collaborated with other major stakeholders in Opticianry on an event to welcome Douglas College Dispensing Optician Program graduates into the profession in efforts to help future registrants maintain strong relations with the College throughout their professional career, to stay updated with legislative changes effecting their practice (such as the 2008 changes to Health Professions Act), and ensuring an effective process of lifelong learning to remain competent and accountable to the public.

June 2008 - Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development agreed to provide financial assistance to the College in support of labour market programming in British Columbia, for the purposes of implementing the Improving Online Assessment of International and Out-of-Province Applicants Project. This is a joint project between the COBC and COA to develop a harmonized assessment and registration process to remove barriers to registration of internationally trained opticians as opticians in British Columbia or Alberta.

September 2008 - the COBC launched a new user-friendly website that featured a directory of opticians for the public to use to find local registered opticians in their communities; and for anyone to obtain more useful information, subscribe to RSS feeds for new announcements, obtain online forms, and for potential registrants to access interactive examinations.

November 2008 - board directed development of revised COBC Bylaws to correct clerical issues, and to update and improve them with a guiding principal being to ensure practicality, fairness for members, and the protection of the public interest.

December 2008 - board directed the administration to conduct an environmental scan. An environmental scan provides a brief summary of current and emerging issues in the broader environment that are of significance to the College in its efforts to continue with an effective and responsive strategic plan.

January 2009 - completed and securely posted the online PLAR examination on the College website. The COBC has collaborated with the COA to develop PLAR to allow registration candidates to demonstrate and obtain recognition for knowledge and skills learned outside of formal training. The benefits of PLAR include the ability to assess applicants who have graduated from programs not accredited by the COBC (who are expected to be predominantly international applicants before they immigrate to Canada) and reducing costs and valuable time by accurately determining if they need additional training in key areas.

February 2009 - board approved cooperating with the Opticians Council of Canada (OCC) to develop an education and awareness campaign to ensure that the public of British Columbia understand the skills and services of opticians consistent with the mandate of the College.

March 2009 - the Quality Assurance Committee published an improved mandatory continuing education (MCE) program based on stakeholder input. The College updated the MCE program to provide registrants with the satisfaction of knowing their knowledge and skills are current to deliver safe and effective vision care to the public.

In addition, the COBC attended a national forum on labour mobility, presented by the Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators (CNNAR). The forum provided an opportunity to strategize the next steps towards achieving full labour mobility.



REGISTRATION

Registration Committee Annual Report

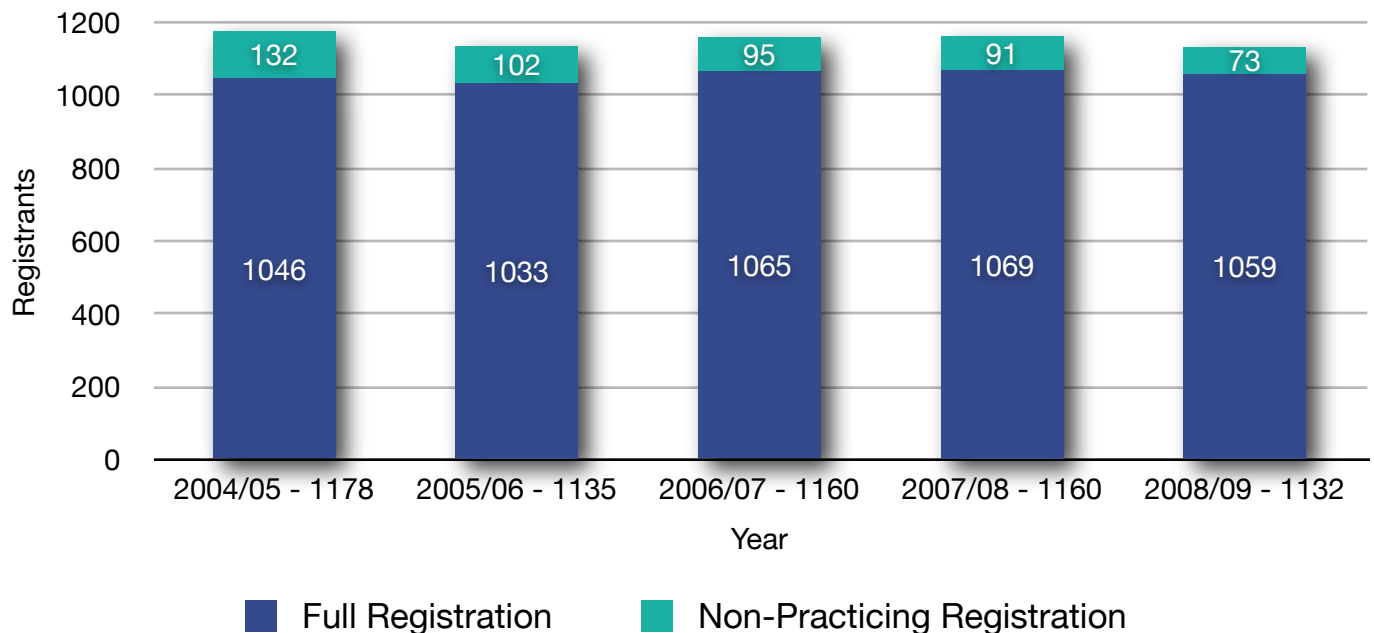
To ensure safe, accountable and effective visual care for the public, legislation requires all dispensing opticians, contact lens fitters and student contact lens fitters in British Columbia to register with the College. The goal of the Registration Committee is to ensure that competency and standards of entry to the profession are maintained and the public is assured safe effective service. In addition, the College has advanced the development of a program to ensure that the public of BC understand the skills and services of opticians.

In 2008/09, the Registration Committee continued addressing the future shortage of skilled labor concern by developing an open, transparent and fair path to registration processes for international and out-of-province applicants. The College received a grant from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development to improve the online assessment tools of international and out-of province applicants by enhancing the registry databases, websites and implementing a secure online academic Prior Learning Assessment examination for the British Columbia and Alberta regulatory bodies. As a result, BC and Alberta will increase access to the opticianry profession by having the ability to assess education of applicants who have not graduated from schools accredited by the COBC including international applicants before they immigrate to Canada, the capacity to harmonize provincial registration data, and ultimately to allow registrants to register online.

Registration Renewals

Registrants must meet the renewal standards of continuing education, professional liability insurance and pay annual fees in order to renew registration. By March 31, 2009 the COBC renewed the registration of 1132 Opticians, including 424 Dispensing Opticians, 635 Contact Lens Fitters, and 73 non-practicing registrants.

2008/09 Registration Renewal

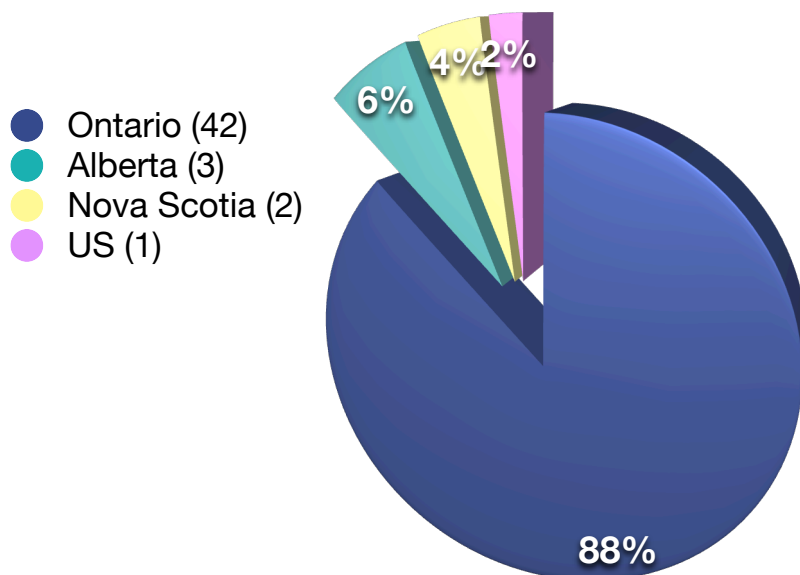


Renewal trends since the 2004/05 fiscal year show that numbers for both renewals of practicing registrants and non-practicing registrants have maintained a steady range. This is mainly due to both the continued demand for opticians and the transfer of BC opticians to other Canadian provinces within their first year of registration. The aging population anticipates a greater need for eye care and the demand for opticians to meet that need. The government's Trade, Investment, and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) and revised Labour Mobility Chapters of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) clearly react to supply and demand issues within Canada. While the COBC has fully complied with the government's requirements in TILMA and AIT to recognize opticians across Canada, the College is also building on the success of the 1999 adoption of the Opticians Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) to further align procedures, assessments, competencies, verification processes, and database work towards pure bilateralism and zero barriers to entry.

The COBC has two official registration statuses: suspended or registered. The suspended status includes a large number of opticians who have not renewed their membership. Most of these opticians have retired or moved to another jurisdiction. Few are suspended for failure to pay annual dues, not completing their continuing education program or other disciplinary action. In 2008/09, there were 125 suspensions of registration, including 33 Dispensing Opticians, 68 Contact Lens Fitters, and 24 Non-Practicing registrants. The COBC has an important ongoing responsibility to ensure any individual practicing opticianry in British Columbia, regardless of their employer, meets registration requirements.

Labour Mobility and Letters of Good Standing

Canadian opticians have always recognized the importance of labour mobility occupational requirements across Canada. Currently nine provincial regulatory bodies, including the COBC, have signed the MRA to ensure that no barriers exist regarding labour mobility for Canadian opticians.





The COBC received 42 requests for a Letter of Good Standing in 2008/09. A Letter of Good Standing acts to verify that the registrant is in good standing with the COBC and is required by the individual before s/he can register and practice opticianry in another jurisdiction under labour mobility agreements.

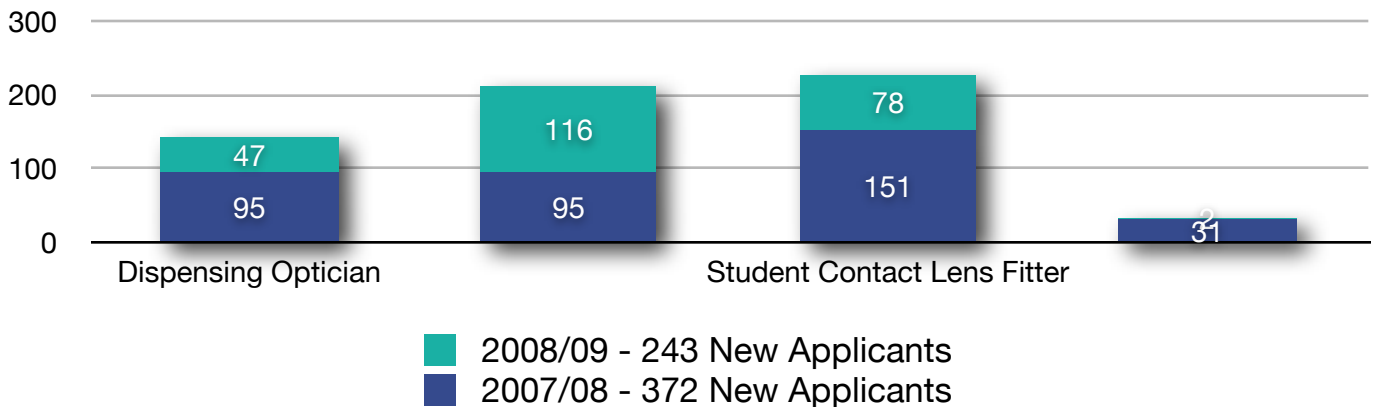
Applications for Registration

The COBC granted registration to 243 new applications between April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009. No qualified applicants were refused registration.

2008/09 NUMBER OF NEW APPLICANTS	
New Dispensing Opticians	47
New Contact Lens Fitters	116
New Student Contact Lens Fitters	78
New Non-Practicing Opticians	2

In 2008/09, the COBC received 9 requests for registration from internationally trained opticians. The Registration Committee accredited the education of the 5 applicants and accredited the education and examination of 1 applicant. As of March 31, 2009, 3 files that were submitted in 2008/09 remain open, pending further review by the Committee.

2008/09 New Applicants (In Comparison with Previous Year)



REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

John Kerns, Chair

Wayne Mullen

Stephanie Weir

June Barens (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Raheem Savja (Term Started: April 5, 2009)

Kent Ashby (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Clara Mainville (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Meetings in 2008/09

In-person: 1

By Correspondence: Biweekly

COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION

Inquiry & Discipline Committee Annual Report

Registered opticians are highly trained, competent health professionals that have a good reputation with the public of British Columbia. One of the most important responsibilities of the College is to ensure accountability and that opticians maintain a high standard of care.

To aid the complaint-resolution system, the COBC has provided an online step-by-step guide to the complaints process and a standardized complaint form to ensure the BC public easily understands what to expect when filing a complaint. In addition, a summary of actions taken by the inquiry committee is published on the COBC website.

The Inquiry Committee treats all complaints in a confidential manner. The College investigates all complaints received from the public, other health care professionals and opticians related to an opticians' professional practice. Before coming to a resolution, the Inquiry Committee will invite the registrant to respond to the complaint. However, without a response by the optician, the committee will act unilaterally. The Committee may resolve issues using alternative dispute mechanisms such as mediation and signed undertakings. If the issue cannot be resolved by mediation, the complaint will be referred to the Discipline Committee for further action.

The College's Quality Assurance Program requires optician who conduct automated refractions to complete an advanced training course and undergo a COBC certification examination. In 2008/09, opticians continued to demonstrate high regards for public safety and there were no automated refraction complaints filed with the College.

The Inquiry Committee will continue ensuring that the College's complaint, inquiry, and discipline processes are transparent and fair to the public of British Columbia. Under the Health Professions Act and other enactments, the board defines the strategic goals and objectives of the College and forecasts the long-term needs of the public.

2008/09 Complaints Resolution Statistics

The Inquiry Committee reviewed 3 complaints carried over from 2007/08, and reviewed 17 new complaints in 2008/2009. Complaints generally fall into 5 categories: unauthorized practice, breach of professional conduct, standards of practice, Health Professions Act or professional ethics. The COBC also investigates complaints regarding unauthorized practice.

COMPLAINTS SUMMARY BY 2008/09 INQUIRY COMMITTEE	
Allegations of unauthorized practice	2
Allegations of breach of professional conduct	2
Allegations of breach of Standards of Practice	12
Allegations of breach of Health Professions Act	0
Allegations of breach of professional ethics and/or business practice	1

The Inquiry Committee made 15 decisions on 15 files in 2008/09, including 1 file submitted in 2007/2008. As of March 31, 2009, 3 files that were submitted in 2008/09 remain open, pending further action by the Committee. The descriptions of the 15 decisions are as follows:

COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION SUMMARY BY 2008/09 INQUIRY COMMITTEE	
Resolved by signed undertaking	0
Resolved by letter to remind registrant of the Standards of Practice	1
Resolved by mediated result	6
Resolved by remaking eyewear	0
Resolved by registrant-initiated resolution	3
Dismissed after redirection to Board of Examiners in Optometry	1
Dismissed after inquiry committee investigation	2
Dismissed due to frivolous nature or complaint does not contain allegations that are subject to investigation	2

There were no files referred to the Discipline Committee in 2008/09.

INQUIRY COMMITTEE

Lutz Sprecher, Chair (Position Started February 15, 2009)

Alan Cheng

June Barens (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Zuheir Merali (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Sara Moshurchak (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

David Nelson, Chair (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Mary Jane Stenberg (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Raheem Savja (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Meetings in 2008/09

In-person: 3

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Kent Ashby, Chair

Brad Benson (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Herbie Kalsi (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Rebecca Sit (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Ron Philip (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Floyd Steinky (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Rino Pirroddi (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

John Moss (Term Started: February 15, 2009)

Ron Boyce (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Colleen Laferrier (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Debra Szteina (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Patricia Vaz (Term Ended: February 15, 2009)

Meetings in 2008/09

In-person: none

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality Assurance Committee Annual Report

To ensure a high standard of care is provided to the public, opticians must maintain lifelong learning and demonstrate continuing competence through ongoing quality assurance activities. The College's Quality Assurance (QA) Program was developed to provide opticians with the professional development resources to continue to enhance their knowledge and skills (Mandatory Continuing Education Program) and improve their professional competence (Continuing Competency Program).

Continuing Competency Program

In 2008/09, the Quality Assurance Committee began to develop a continuing competency program to promote high quality practice standards amongst opticians for the public's protection. The goal of the program is for opticians to be consciously competent and have an understanding the skills to complete and executing a task well.

Opticians will be expected to assess their individual skills, equipment, and resources to enhance the delivery of services utilizing those skills. With rapid changes in health care technology, an aging demographic, research having an impact on eye care and eye care services, the Committee is working on developing courses to offer areas of specialty for opticians to handle emerging issues such as vision screening outreach, low vision, physiology, pediatrics and geriatrics.

Continuing Education Program

The key-initiative of the Quality Assurance Committee's QA Program in 2008/09 was improving and revising the Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) Program and the MCE Accreditation Policy. The objective of revising the MCE Program was twofold:

1. To produce a document that benchmarked the current role of opticians in BC and outlined how the COBC wanted the profession of Opticianry to evolve in the next 5 years; and
2. To improve the MCE program to increase opticians' interest in continuing education.

The updated MCE Program features accountability of learning, development of quality seminars, suitable credit system and the promotion of higher education. Opticians need to be aware of new techniques and knowledge that may have an impact on eye care or the services they render to clients. It is the role of the COBC to ensure that opticians are learning and the public has a right to expect that registered health professional continually demonstrate proficiency in their chosen field.



Improving the quality of continuing education courses was an important factor in updating the MCE Program. The College and other opticianry stakeholders will collaborate to produce better continuing education seminars through trained speakers, relevant content and topics and engaging presentations. The COBC is encouraging the provincial association to design an integrated program of lecture development with corporate members to meet the emerging content desired by the board.

The new database and online tools provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development grant will allow opticians to access their continuing education portfolio online, improve online course accessibility and offer online examinations. The updated MCE Program has increased accountability of learning by testing opticians with an online examination after completing after finishing each online course or live seminar and measuring their level of learning.

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Inderjit Bamrah, Chair (Term Ended: April 5, 2009)

Cindy Koszegi (Term Ended: April 5, 2009)

Raj Mann (Term Ended: April 5, 2009)

John Moss (Term Ended: April 5, 2009)

Mary Jane Stenberg (Term Ended: April 5, 2009)

Meetings in 2008/09

In-person: 4

EXAMINATIONS

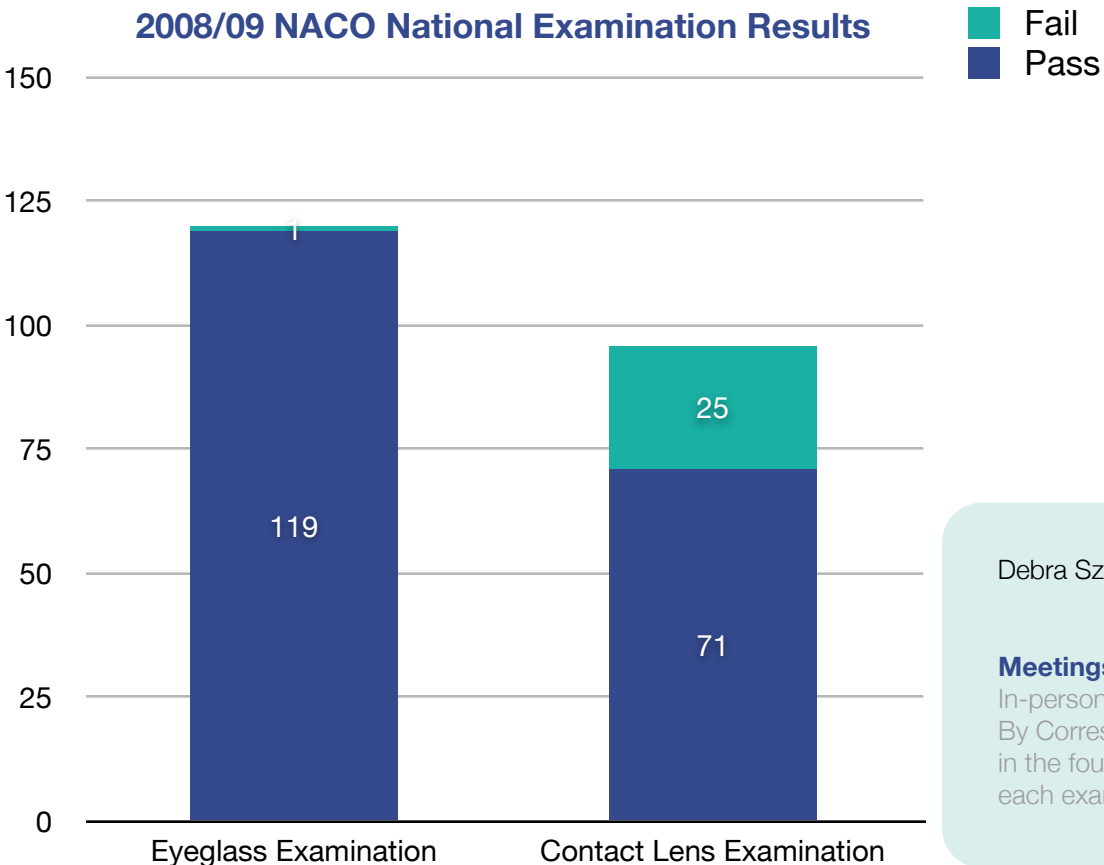
Examination Annual Report

Part of the College’s registration requirements for dispensing opticians and contact lens fitters is to successfully pass the National Accreditation Committee of Opticians’ (NACO) national examination. NACO administers the national examination across Canada and is used by nine provincial opticianry regulatory bodies as their entry-to-practice examination. To measure the key competencies required of entry-level opticians for safe and effective practice, eligible candidates are examined on the national Optical Sciences 1 - Eyeglass and Optical Science 2 - Contact Lens examinations.

The national examination is held in British Columbia over two weekends a year - one spring and one fall session. The administration of examinations requires close cooperation between the COBC, NACO, Douglas College and BC College of Optics. Since examinations are held in various locations throughout Canada, NACO sends an Examination Moderator to each sitting of the examination to ensure uniformity of exam application. The three-day examination sessions also require time, commitment and dedication from registrants to help coordinate and act as examiners.

NACO Examination Results

Within the group of 120 candidates who took the Optical Science 1 - Eyeglass Examination in May and October 2008, 119 passed and 1 failed. Within the group of 96 candidates who took the Optical Science 2 - Contact Lens Examination in May and October 2008, 71 passed and 25 failed.



Debra Szteina, Chief Examiner

Meetings in 2008/09
 In-person: 2
 By Correspondence: Regularly in the four weeks leading up to each examination.

ADMINISTRATION

Administration Annual Report

The COBC office consists of five staff members that are responsible for supporting the Board, committees and examiners and developing ways to achieve their strategic goals, objectives and duties. At the beginning of the fiscal year, the COBC made changes to the College's administration team by hiring an administration assistant to support the increase in workload due to new 2008/09 project initiatives.

Registrant Relations

The COBC staff works with new and current registrants to guide them on being a self-regulated health professional in British Columbia. The administration assists opticians on a variety of issues such as registration, continuing education, advising on regulations and the standards of practice, and helping opticians communicate with their clients and public more effectively through useful collateral documents.

In 2008/09, the College further improved registrant relations by adding online communication tools such as RSS feeds and an online registry of BC opticians for registrants to update their professional profiles and the public to easily find an optician in their community.

Board and Committee Meetings

In 2008/09 the COBC administration worked with the board on building a policy governance framework and developing board leadership. The board created an ad hoc policy governance committee to work on reviewing and defining the Board and Committees' Terms of Reference and policies. The staff was responsible for developing methods to achieve results based on the policy governance framework and for example, refined board and committee materials and communication documents to ensure advanced discussions on policy issues and regulatory initiatives.

Interprovincial Collaboration

To enable labour mobility, both the BC and Alberta optician regulatory bodies are signatories to the Mutual Recognition Agreement. The COBC and the College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) committed to a joint project in 2008/09 developing a harmonized assessment and registration process to remove barriers to registration as an optician to British Columbia or Alberta for internationally trained opticians. The administrations of both the COBC and COA worked together to enhance both organizations' database, website, and Prior Learning Assessment tools. This joint project between BC and Alberta will be completed by the end of 2009. The result will be quicker access to information for applicants as well as a more transparent and accessible process for application from outside Canada or the two provinces.

Stakeholder Relations

The COBC recognized the importance of a good website to educate the public, keep other stakeholders informed, and the value of online applications. In 2008/09, the COBC was redesigned its website to provide up-to-date highlights to all the College's stakeholders, more information on the public section, real time updates through RSS feeds, online optician registry, applications to contact the office, and easy navigation.

The College strengthened the collaborative relations formed through outreach and consultation sessions with registrants, post-secondary education institutions and provincial and national stakeholders. For example in 2008/09, to ensure the public are able to identify competent and registered opticians in British Columbia and understand the changes to the profession, the COBC joined with the Opticians Council of Canada (representing twenty-three Opticianry organizations across Canada and their members) on a progressive public education and awareness campaign.

COBC STAFF

Nick Atkinson, Registrar

Michael Tsao, Deputy Registrar

Connie Chong, Assistant Registrar

Sherry Kaiway, Office Manager

Harbinder Grewal, Administrative Assistant

FINANCE

Financial Management Annual Report

The COBC Finance Committee delivers timely disclosures about the COBC's financial situation. The Board regularly reviews the financials at every meeting and the 2008/09 audited financial statements are available on the COBC website. The Chair of the Finance Committee is a publicly appointed member and meets independently with the COBC's Auditor.

As a result of the Committee's strive for excellence in meeting budgets and maintaining control procedures, the COBC met its budget, while undertaking 2 major projects:

1. A public awareness and professional identity strategy has been launched to improve the public's understanding of the profession. This has the goal of helping the public understand the changes to the profession and understand emerging issues relevant to their eye care.
2. The COBC applied for and was awarded a grant of \$131,250 from the Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. The grant is to develop and launch a project to improve the online assessment of international and out-of-province applicants. A progress payment of \$82,000 was received in this fiscal year out of the grant amount. The remainder of the grant funds are expected in the next fiscal year as progress or completion payments. The COBC gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution of the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada in supporting the Improving Online Assessment of International and Out-of-Province Applicants Project.

Total expenses are higher than the previous year, mostly as a result of the two major projects above, and rising legal costs in dealing with unauthorized practice and other legal challenges.

In 2008/09, the total amount of (unrestricted Net Assets) money on reserve was \$473,136, which would cover approximately nine months of COBC expenses for 2009/10. The College had a \$2,831 surplus this year and the Board does not foresee a large increase in surpluses in the future. The Board has decided that \$473,136 is an appropriate and sufficient surplus to cover unexpected surprises in the future and will allow the College to continue its mandate without undue financial stress.

The COBC remains committed to financial accountability and sustainability, and has control practices place to ensure these principles are maintained.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Cytra, Chair
Nick Atkinson, Registrar
Michael Tsao, Deputy Registrar

Meetings in 2008/09

By Correspondence: Bi-monthly

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Cytra, Chair
Keon Kwan, Appointed Auditor

Meetings in 2008/09

By Correspondence: regularly during the annual audit in July 2009