



College of Opticians of Ontario

# Annual Report 2024



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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



The College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) operates on the traditional lands of many nations, including the Mississauga's of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippawa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat people. The COO acknowledges and respects that these lands are now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, who continue to experience the impact of colonization. The COO also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. With the utmost respect and humility, we at the COO are grateful to live and work on these lands and are committed to educating ourselves in areas of cultural safety and humility in the delivery of equitable health care in Ontario.



# REGULATING ONTARIO OPTICIANS

## OUR MANDATE

The College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) is the registering and regulating body for the profession of opticianry in Ontario. The COO's mandate is to protect the public interest and hold Ontario's opticians accountable to the established legislation, standards of practice, code of ethics, policies, and guidelines relevant to opticianry practice.

## ABOUT OPTICIANS

Opticians are health professionals trained to interpret prescriptions prepared by physicians, and optometrists to supply, fit, and dispense eyeglasses, contact lenses, and other vision aids.

Opticians are often referred to as the “pharmacists of eye care”: they do not perform eye exams nor prescribe, but they can fill your prescription.

Only registered opticians, medical doctors, and Optometrists are entitled to perform the controlled act of dispensing in Ontario.



# 2024 MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Derick Summers, RO

2024 was a working year. The second year of the COO’s three-year strategic plan it was a year of effort; a year of adding depth and accomplishment to the strategic goals set by the board in 2022 and begun in 2023. Our focus remained the same:

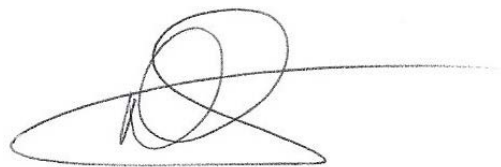
- 1. Safer and more inclusive patient care
- 2. An approach that is relational, accessible and responsive to changes in technology, and evolving patient expectations; and
- 3. Demonstrating regulatory leadership through governance excellence

2024 saw the COO continue to work on processing times for ICRC, QA, and Discipline; striving for greater efficiency while still ensuring a culture of fairness, care, and due diligence to all stakeholders; all the while maintaining its mandate of self-regulation in the public interest. Technological advances and access were used to great advantage in this area and continued to be important as the COO took a multi-pronged approach to reach both registrants and the public. With these advances and changes the COO was able to engage and educate registrants with an ongoing series of ‘Lunch & Learns’ throughout the year, while continually offering practice support through its social media presence. From a public care perspective, the COO was able to provide the public greater access to and understanding of the profession and its role in their health care.

The COO did not rely solely on technological advances to take an inspirational leadership role and instead combined these virtual efforts with the more traditional, continuing its engagement with CE providers and the public. Of particular note; the COO reprised the spirit of town halls while joining the OOA on its “travelling roadshow” across the province; it also engaged the public directly with projects like its “Citizen Advisory Committee”. Collaboration was at the fore as the College continued to foster relations with stakeholders from the Ministry of Health to the College of Optometry to Industry to other health colleges provincially and nationally; throughout 2024 the COO has continued to engage and raise the bar.

That’s not to say that 2024 was simply a year of external focus and accomplishment. No, 2024 provided ample opportunities to continue to measurably improve inwardly. From launching two new regulations and creating the policies and procedures necessary to support them, to continuing to apply a DEI lens to its own governance journey while working stringently to eliminate barriers to engagement, to collaboratively sharing its physical resources and space with College of Respiratory Therapists as a means of improving economic efficiency; the College has accomplished much to be proud of in 2024.

So, as we close 2024, I look forward to 2025 and all the opportunities it will hold; opportunities to innovate, to educate, and to, of course, self-regulate. The COO’s mandate is to protect and serve the public interest by ensuring that opticians deliver safe, ethical care to Ontario patients. This is not a passive act; this is an action, a call to lead, to collaborate, and to care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line.

Derick Summers Board Chair



# 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Derick Summers**  
Board Chair  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Kevin Cloutier**  
Vice Chair  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Omar Farouk**  
Board Public Member



**Paul Imola**  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Peggy Judge**  
Board Public Member



**Stephen Kinsella**  
Board Public Member



**Samir Modhera**  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Alicia Munian**  
Board Public Member



**Tonya Nahmabin**  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Carlo Pacheco**  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Grazyna Czyska**  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Rob Vezina**  
RO, Board Professional Member



**Henry Wiersema**  
Board Public Member



**Paul Wilk**  
Board Public Member

## ADMINISTRATION



**Fazal Khan**  
RO, Registrar, CEO



**Amy Stein**  
Deputy Registrar & General Counsel

## APPOINTED MEMBERS



**Jamuna Balaram**  
Community Appointee



**John Battaglia**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Lindsay Beriault**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Jay Bhatt**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Elliot Borins**  
Community Appointee



**Angelia Brown**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Melissa Campbell**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Parneet Dhillon**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Parminder Kalsi**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Stephanie Kelly**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Janice Mallette**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Rob Quinn**  
RO, Professional Appointee



**Elisabeth Roche**  
RO, Professional Appointee

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2025



As 2024 comes to a close, and we look back, some key achievements stand out that reflect the progress the COO has made towards achieving the strategic priorities set out in the 2023-2025 strategic plan. The Strategic Plan guides the College in fulfilling its mandate while being mindful and responsive to the evolving practice environment. Establishing and following a Strategic Plan ensures the effective use of college resources and demonstrates our commitment to transparency, accountability, integrity, and efficiency.

In 2024, the college played a role in maintaining standards of professionalism for registered opticians, innovation in regulation, and excellence in public protection. Throughout the year, the College has made significant strides in advancing the practice of opticians, ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality care to Ontarians, and fostering continuous professional development for registrants.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Safer and more inclusive patient care
- The COO is relational, accessible, and responsive to changes in technology and evolving patient expectations.
- The COO demonstrates regulatory leadership through governance excellence.



# LICENSING QUALIFIED OPTICIANS FOR SAFE PATIENT CARE

It is the College's responsibility to ensure that only qualified, competent, and ethical opticians are licensed to practice in Ontario, whether they have completed their education and training in Ontario, in another province, or another country. When the College receives an application for licensure, we look at an applicant's education, training, and experience. We also ensure there are no concerns about behaviour, health, or performance that could prevent the optician from providing safe, ethical and competent care to patients. After registration, the College works with opticians to ensure they maintain competence throughout their careers.

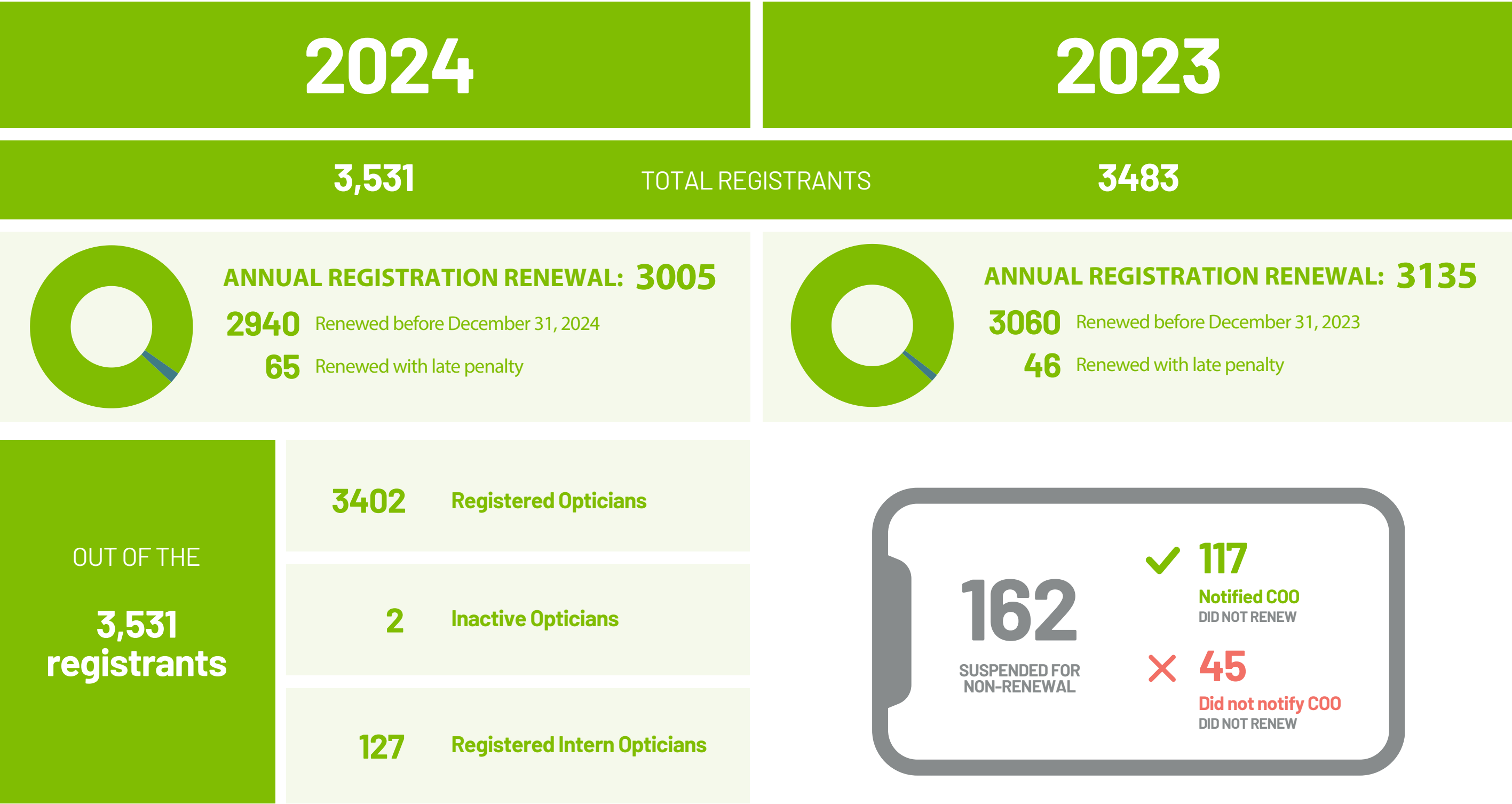


## 2024 REGISTRATION ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Implemented** changes to Registration and Examination Regulations that came into effect on July 1, 2024. These are the first major changes to the Registration Regulation since 1993.
- **Introduced** a new Inactive Class of registration for non-practising opticians.
- **Developed** and implemented five new policies and reviewed eight existing ones.
- **Launched** an online application portal, simplifying the application process for users, improving accessibility, and enhancing efficiency, resulting in shorter application processing timelines.
- **Engaged** registrants and stakeholders in a wide-scale education campaign to support applicants, registrants, and system partners to understand and implement the changes related to the new regulation. This included e-blasts, social media posts, website updates, blog posts, webinars, speaking spots, and/or booths at six in-person registrant events across the province in Toronto, Ottawa, London, and Sudbury.
- **Promoted** the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program. In 2024, the College initiated a project with NACOR and the other Canadian opticianry regulators to develop a public awareness campaign to promote the PLAR process as an alternative pathway to registration.



# REGISTRATION TRENDS



NEW REGISTRATIONS

206 INTERNS



210 NEWLY APPROVED REGISTERED OPTICIANS

147  
Ontario  
educated

7  
Labour  
Mobility

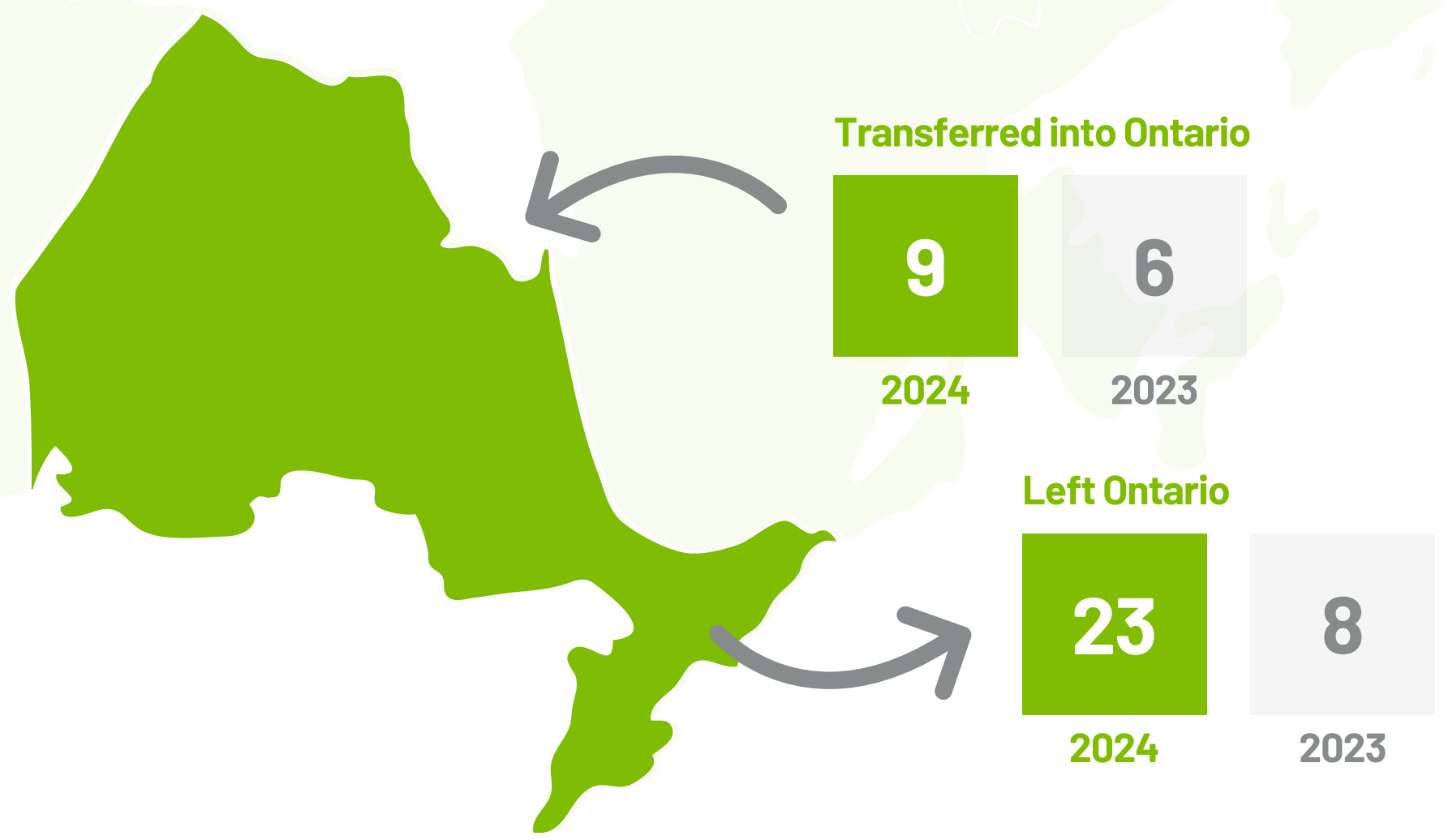
43  
Canadian  
educated

13  
Internationally  
educated



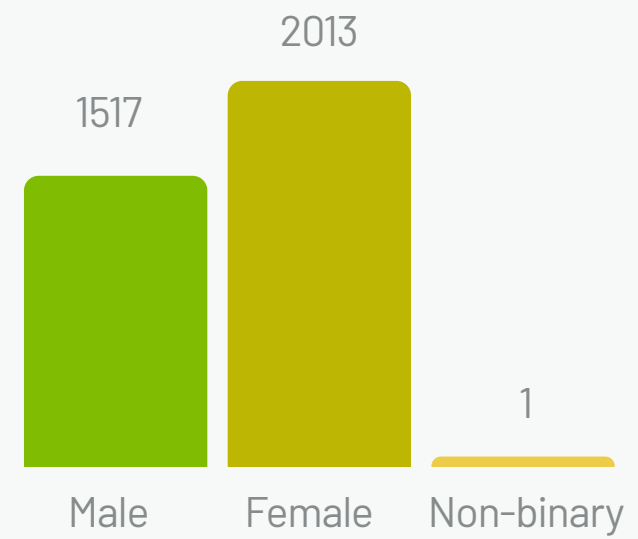


# NATIONAL MOBILITY

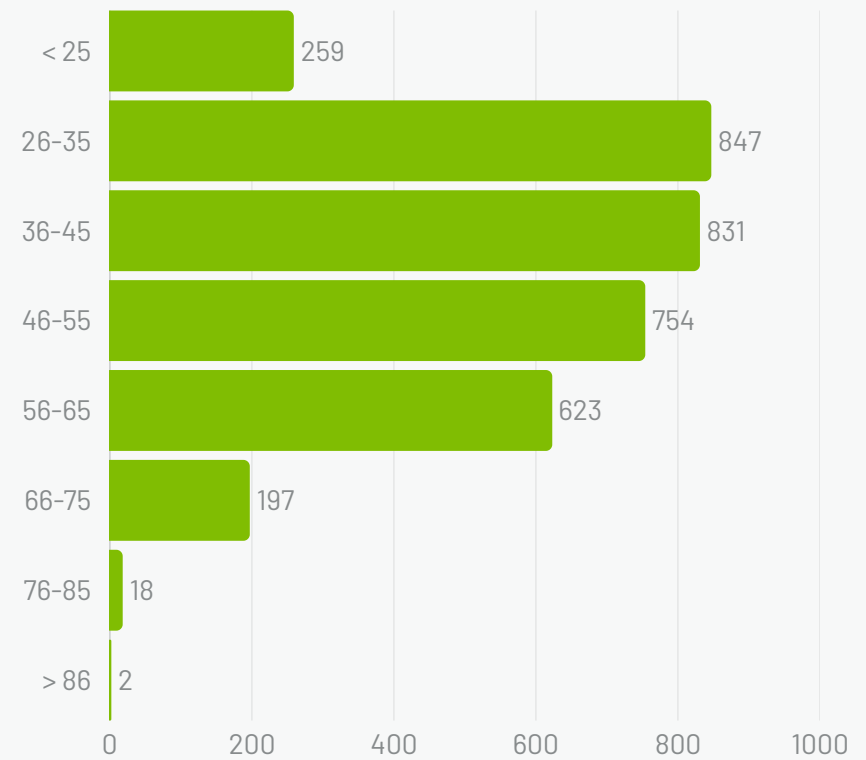


# DEMOGRAPHICS

## GENDER



## AGE

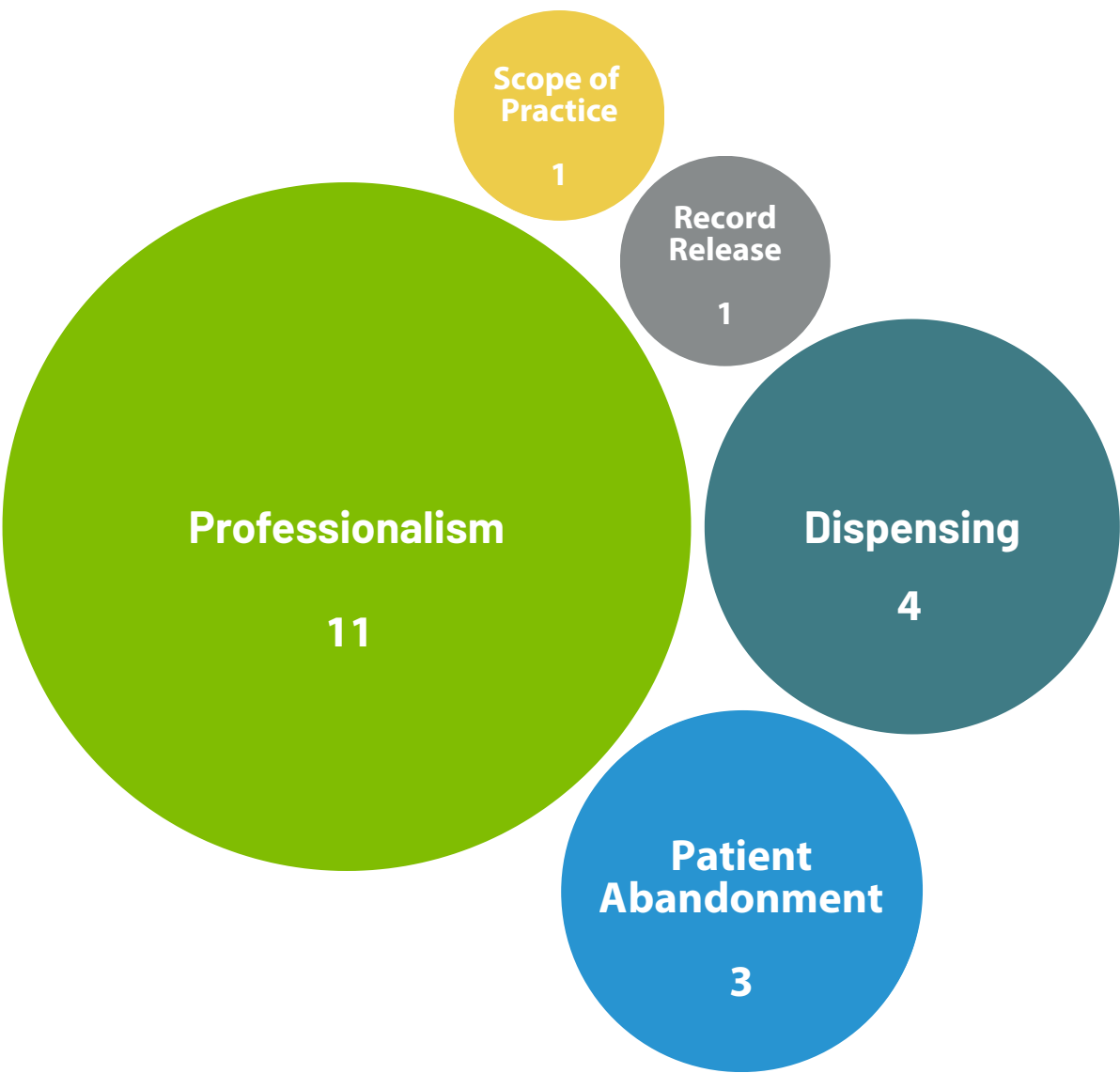


# ENSURING PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR SAFE PATIENT CARE

## INQUIRIES COMPLAINTS & REPORTS

The ICRC plays a vital role in maintaining the integrity of the profession by reviewing concerns about opticians’ conduct and practice. These concerns may arise from public complaints, reports from the Registrar, or referrals from the College’s Quality Assurance Committee.

In 2024, the COO received the following types of complaints:



\* **Patient Abandonment:** When an RO closes a business without notifying patients, patients may be left without access to their records and/or any outstanding orders. The complaints received in 2024 had one or both elements.

### UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE

As one of its strategic priorities, the COO continues to address the harm posed by unlicensed practitioners. Unlicensed practitioners who may not be properly trained to provide services and who are not bound by the standards of practice for Registered Opticians pose a risk to patients, who may not be aware that they are receiving services from an unlicensed individual. In 2024, the College received and investigated 23 unauthorized practice reports and closed 21 reports.



### 2024 DISCIPLINE DECISIONS




[Click here to see decisions made by the Discipline Committee in 2024.](#)

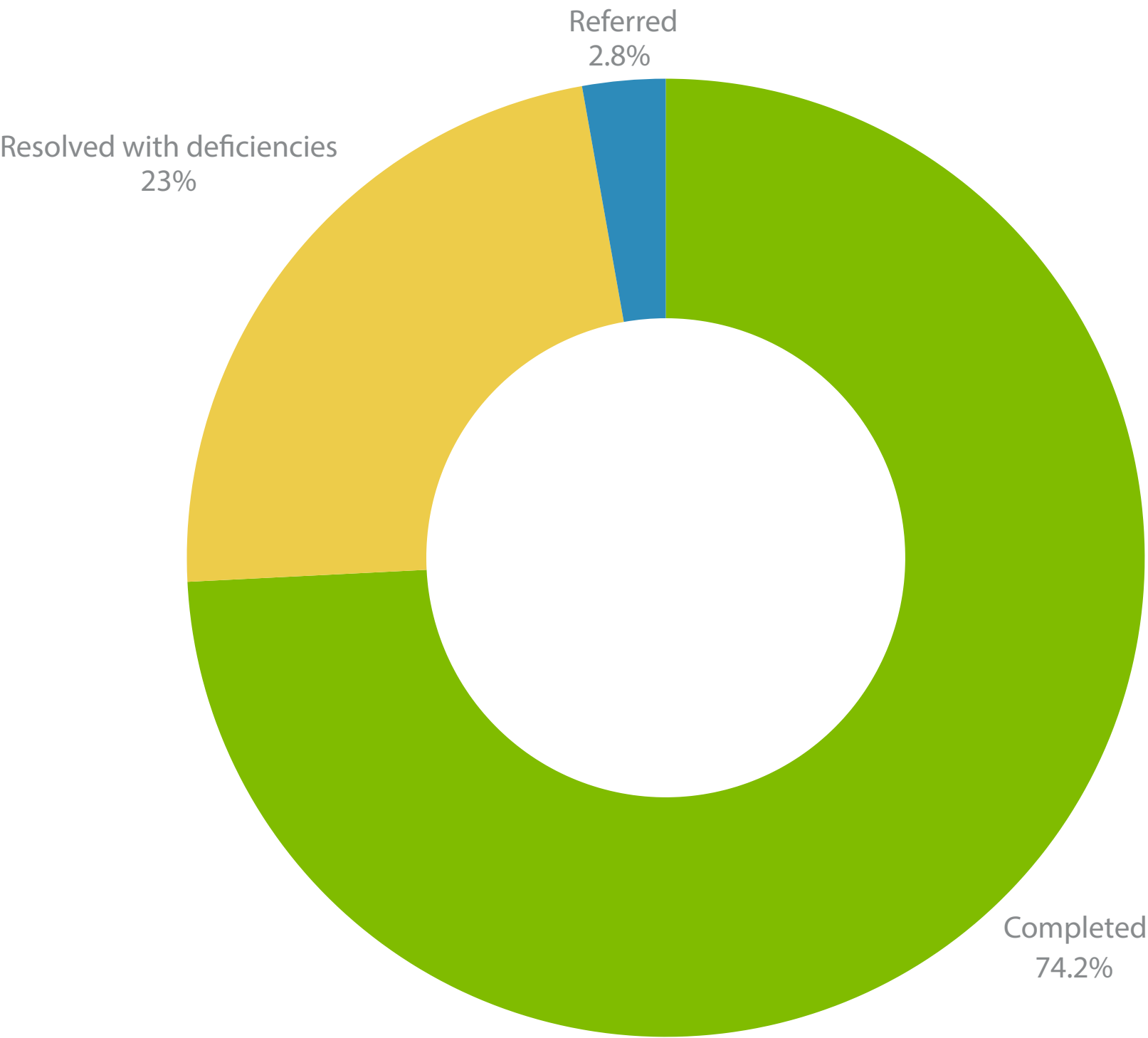


# MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The COO supports opticians in lifelong learning through the Quality Assurance (QA) program, where opticians evaluate their practice and engage in professional development. The Competency Review and Evaluation (CRE) Process allows the QA Committee to monitor participation in the QA program. Randomly selected registrants have their previous year's Professional Portfolio audited and, where required, participate in a Peer and Practice Assessment.



-  Registrants who completed the process **74.2%**
-  Registrants with deficiencies that were resolved **23%**
-  Registrants referred for a peer and practice assessment or to ICRC due to non-compliance **2.8%**



# MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS



## 2024 QUALITY ASSURANCE ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Extended** the deadline to complete and submit the annual professional portfolio requirements to align with the new annual renewal deadline. Accordingly, the portfolio year will run from January 16 to January 15 of the following year.
- **Approved** a structured schedule for policy review and reviewed ten existing policies.
- **Developed** a free on-demand continuing education platform where registrants can log in to access free content.
- **Reduced** peer and practice fees for registrants ordered to participate in a Peer and Practice Assessment by the Quality Assurance Committee.
- **Updated** risk-based selection criteria for the Competency Review and Evaluation process
- **Introduced** random selection for Peer and Practice Assessments
- **Updated** the Peer and Practice Assessment Tool
- **Changed** the continuing education policy to allow opticians to count time spent supervising, teaching, volunteering, or participating in College / Association work toward their annual self-directed hours.



# INNOVATION & EFFICIENCY

*Responding to Changes in Technology*



## LAUNCH OF ONLINE APPLICATIONS

In keeping with our strategic objective of ensuring technology is effectively leveraged, the COO has launched a new online application platform to replace the paper-based system. With over 200 applications received each year on top of 3000+ renewals and reinstatements, online applications enhanced the user experience, shortened processing times, and improved accuracy.



## DATABASE IMPROVEMENTS

In 2024, the renewal portal was completely overhauled and upgraded to account for the major updates to the College's Registration Regulation that came into force in July, including the creation of a new Inactive Class. In addition, Contact Lens Mentor renewal was automated, streamlining the process, and a new portal was launched for continuing education providers.



## TRANSFER OF EXAM ADMINISTRATION TO NACOR

In 2024, the National Alliance of Optician Regulators (NACOR) took over the administration of the annual Eyeglass and Contact Lens licensing exams. Previously, exams were co-administered by the COO and NACOR. The transfer of full administration to NACOR aligns the COO with the majority of other Canadian provinces, while also freeing up valuable staff resources and providing applicants with a more streamlined and efficient exam experience.

# INNOVATION & EFFICIENCY

*Responding to Changes in Technology*



## LAUNCH OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PORTAL

In 2024, to make it easier for opticians to meet their CE requirements and stay informed while balancing busy schedules, the COO launched a portal for registrants to access free continuing education resources, including webinar recordings and education modules on important regulatory updates and professional obligations.

Registrants can also access recordings of board meetings on the College's YouTube channel.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF UPDATED COO REGULATIONS

The COO worked to support registrants in 2024 as significant amendments to three of its regulations came into force: Registration, Examinations, and Professional Misconduct. Changes were shared with registrants using social media posts, blogs, and FAQs. The College also delivered five live presentations, attended six registrant events, and held three accredited Lunch & Learn webinars to communicate changes and answer questions.



## ENGAGING CONTINUING EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The Quality Assurance department hosted the annual meeting for continuing education providers to seek input and update providers on changes to the program, as well as regulatory trends.



# PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION



## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, the COO continued its work with the College of Optometrists of Ontario to engage with members of the Indigenous community to better understand the experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis patients seeking and receiving eye care. By collaborating as two regulators of vital vision care services, the colleges plan to use the knowledge gained through the engagement project to work toward aligned standards and guidelines that will support registrants in delivering culturally competent vision care.



## SPACE SHARING

The College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario and the COO are now sharing office space, resulting in annual cost savings for both parties. In preparation for the co-sharing arrangement, flexible 'hotel' style workstations were created. Signage was incorporated for both parties, and lockers were installed for team members.



## PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT RECOGNITION (PLAR) AWARENESS PROGRAM

The COO collaborated with NACOR to promote the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process through a public awareness campaign. The campaign targets an international audience, specifically individuals who may be considering a career in opticianry in Canada and have relevant experience from another country. To support this effort, the COO continues to promote PLAR on our social media platforms.

# REACHING PEOPLE ACROSS ONTARIO

## *Sudbury-Ottawa-London-Toronto*

In keeping with the COO's strategic priority of increasing opportunities for registrant engagement and education, the COO hit the road with the Ontario Opticians Association (OOA) and the Academy of Ophthalmic Education (AOE) to connect with over 1000 registrants at six separate events across the province. The events provided an opportunity to engage with registrants and to deliver important regulatory updates through accredited presentations.

COO staff engaged with students, registrants, and colleagues at a variety of events, meetings, and conferences held throughout the year.

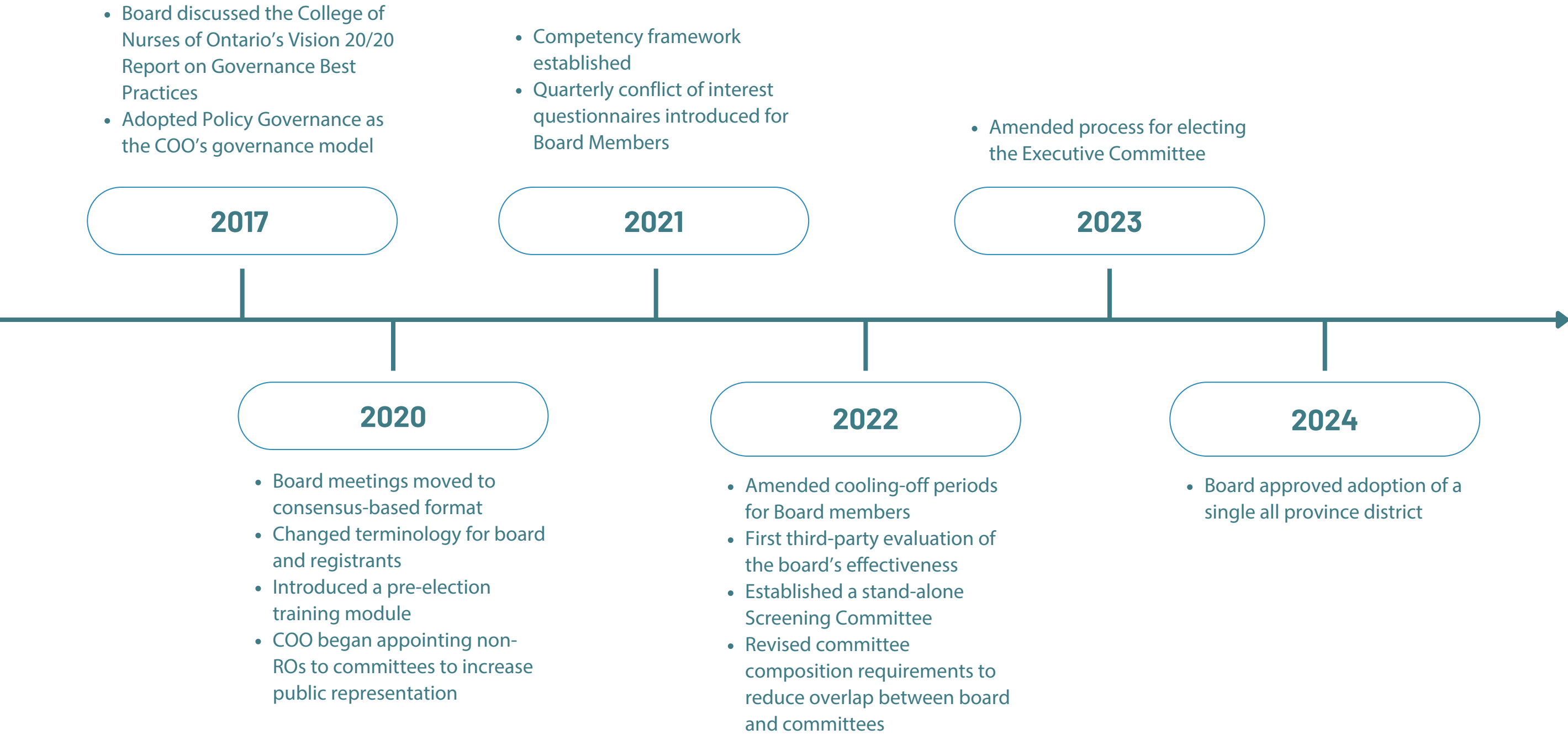
### ENGAGING REGISTRANTS & SYSTEM PARTNERS

- **February 23:** Georgian College Student presentation, Barrie
- **March 24, 2024:** Academy of Ophthalmic Education (AOE) Continuing Education Day and Tradeshow, Richmond Hill
- **March 25, 2024:** Seneca Student Event, Toronto
- **April 21, 2024:** Ontario Opticians Association (OOA) Continuing Education Event and Tradeshow, Toronto
- **May 1 & 2, 2024:** NACOR national regulatory meeting, Halifax
- **May 4-6, 2024:** Registration Exams, Toronto
- **June 23, 2024:** OOA Continuing Education Event and Tradeshow, Sudbury
- **September 15, 2024:** OOA Continuing Education Show, Ottawa
- **October 6, 2024:** OOA Continuing Education Show, London
- **October 7-8, 2024:** CNAR Regulatory Symposium, Ottawa
- **October 9, 2024:** National Meetings, Ottawa
- **November 2, 2024:** OOA Student Night, Toronto
- **November 3, 2024:** OOA Continuing Education Show, Toronto
- **November 12, 2024:** Registrant Renewal Assistance Webinar





# REGULATORY LEADERSHIP THROUGH GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE



# PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

## COLLEGE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

The College Performance Measurement Framework (CPMF) is designed by the Ministry of Health to publicly share information about the performance of health regulatory colleges against a consistent set of standards. Throughout 2024, the COO continued to demonstrate its commitment to public protection, transparency, and strong governance.

In 2024, the COO reported meeting, or partially meeting, all 50 measures identified by the Ministry of Health. Of these, 96% were fully met, and 4% were partially met.



[Click here to view the full CPMF document.](#)



## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

**Communicating regulation changes:** The deployment of a wide-scale education campaign to support registrants, applicants, educators, and other system partners understand and implement changes arising from amendments to three of the COO’s regulations that took effect on July 1, 2024.

**Collaborating with system partners:** Four collaborations with other health regulatory colleges to streamline regulatory processes and support registrants in delivering safe and inclusive vision care. Working with NACOR to promote the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process as a pathway to registration for internationally trained opticians.

**2024 governance milestone:** The COO’s Board of Directors approved reforms to the board election process. The College will move from eight geographic districts to a single all-Ontario district from which all eight professional board members will be elected.





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# FINANCIAL REPORTS

The summary financial statements include an overview of the College's financial position, cash flows, operations, and net assets for the fiscal year, prepared by an independent auditor.

[Read our financial statements](#)

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