



**SUMMER 2020**

**WHAT'S INSIDE**

 **COVID-19 GUIDELINES**

 **VISION MONTH**

 **GOING DIGITAL**

 **EVENTS**

 **COO UPDATE**

**MAY 2020**





# Group Insurance

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# CORONAVIRUS AND THE *New Normal!*



BILL SNELGROVE

We were not prepared. Let's just face facts.

Even though Ontario and Canada are the envy of many nations around the globe for our exceptional, mostly publicly-funded health care system, the emergence and importation of COVID-19 caught all by surprise. At the time of writing this message, Ontario was finally lifting some of the restrictions leading to a phased approach to what businesses and services could and would be opening over the month of June. There were roughly 24,000 reported cases and approximately 2,000 deaths from the virus.

We have experienced the double whammy of both a health care crisis and an economic crisis.

The question now is "What's next?" How do we get back to work and to living in a way that is safe and limits the risk of harm to all? I didn't say how do we get back to normal because, I agree with those who say there is no going back to "normal". There will be a "new normal".

What will be the new normal for opticians and their practices? This issue of the OOA's e-magazine FOCUS will feature a number of articles that explore the restrictions, the guidelines, the legal issues and basically the realities of life post-COVID.

There is no clear path because there are so many unknowns and numerous variables as simple as what happens if the re-openings trigger a new spike in cases and deaths or what happens if the predicted second wave hits in the Fall?

What is clear is we will need to wear protective masks, adhere to social distancing, be asking staff and customers to also wear masks and to interact with us differently.

There will be cleaning protocols to follow for every time someone touches and tries on a new pair of frames. We may continue to offer contact less delivery of repaired glasses to client's homes. We may choose to offer an earlier opening time restricted solely to seniors. We may be choosing to offer virtual care sessions where clients visit us through a Zoom or Webex or other web-based platform.

What we must do is follow what the regulatory body tells us. Please be sure to review both the article provided by a respected law firm and the College of Opticians of Ontario section in FOCUS and website links to ensure you are compliant in this new normal.

Stay safe.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

C O M P A S S I O N A T E

# Compliance



LORNE KASHIN

There's nothing like adversity to bring out the best and the worst in people. It's super to see how Opticians across Ontario responded to news of the pandemic. We have been compliant with both the spirit and the implementation requirements of the mandated restrictions and hygiene practices.

Wearing a facial mask to protect colleagues, clients and ourselves doesn't seem too much to ask.

Closing down a business is not an easy thing to do, nor is trying to continue to serve client urgent needs during such a closure. Oh, there will be stories we share for some time on this experience.

Good news is this seems to be inching past us. We are all working to secure PPE. Who ever talked about PPE before? Some are removing carpet from floors and switching to laminate in preparation for a new look for their re-opening. Others are tossing fabric chairs to replace with wipeable chair coverings. We are shifting eye wear display units to be sure of distance between each. We are installing acrylic protection screens in reception areas and where clients cash out. Hand washing signs and reminders are everywhere.

*Opticians are on the  
Front Line of Vision Care  
even during a Pandemic*

It's all becoming part of our new routine. Yes, it's our new normal. As Bill shared in his message, this issue of FOCUS is dedicated to the "come back" phase and the steps to surviving the pandemic.

I wanted to share that your Association used this time to be innovative. We shifted quickly converting our cherished annual Inside Optics premier event into a webinar partnering with the national body. We kept the content, the excellent speakers and the assigned CEUs and providing it for FREE to members in Ontario and across the country.

E-learning will never replace the experience of attending in-person a large, dynamic, industry-leading conference, but as part of the new normal offering professional development content in web-based modules can be interesting and engaging.

We also had to be sure to bring value to sponsors who lost the opportunity to meet with members and share latest trends and knowledge. Please be sure to read the article in this issue of FOCUS on how we've gone "digital". We launched a full program of digital content including podcasts with interviews, blog thought pieces and social media linked to building the professional voice and image of opticianry.

Stay safe! Stay engaged with OOA.

## EMPLOYMENT LAW CONSIDERATIONS WHEN REOPENING YOUR OPTICAL BUSINESS

As the Ontario economy begins to restart, employers should have a strategy in place to minimize legal liability when reopening their businesses. This article highlights employment law considerations that are critical for the successful reopening of an optical business.

### ENSURING SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Employers are responsible for ensuring safety in their workplaces. These responsibilities are primarily established by legislation such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The following section provides information on how employers can satisfy their legal obligations, including the general obligation to “take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker”

#### Referring to Government and College Guidelines and Directives

Optical businesses must implement appropriate measures to protect the health and safety of workers. When identifying potential safety measures, optical businesses should refer to:

- Health and safety guidelines issued by the Government of Ontario;
- Fact sheets released by Public Health Ontario;
- Guidance and directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ministry of Health; and
- Guidance provided by regulatory bodies such as the College of Opticians of Ontario and the College of Optometrists of Ontario.

As we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic, optical businesses should monitor for updates to the listed resources and continuously re-evaluate the safety measures that have been implemented.

#### Updating Existing Policies and Developing New Policies

Employers should also determine whether their existing policies are sufficient to ensure that employees comply with any new safety measures. It may be necessary to update existing policies or develop new policies altogether.

For example, employers should consider policies that specifically address screening procedures (for employees and patients), social distancing requirements, hygiene and sanitation requirements, and personal protective equipment requirements. When modifying existing policies or implementing new policies, employers should consider all restrictions established by applicable laws, contracts, or collective agreements.

#### Complying with the Work Refusal Procedure

An employee may have the right to refuse work if they believe that the workplace is unsafe. The right is established by Part V of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which also establishes a formal refusal procedure. When an employee refuses work based on

health or safety concerns, optical businesses should speak with their legal advisor to determine whether the circumstances actually trigger the work refusal procedure. Optical businesses should also ensure that they comply with the procedure if it applies.

### **RETURNING EMPLOYEES TO WORK**

Many optical businesses have temporarily laid-off employees during the temporary shutdown of their businesses. The following section of this article provides information on recalling employees to work.

#### **Selecting Employees to Return**

In unionized workplaces, a collective agreement will likely require employees to be recalled in a specific order.

In non-unionized workplaces, employers typically have more freedom to select the employees who will be recalled first. Employers should select employees for recall based on objective, non-discriminatory criteria. Employers should also ensure that the recall order complies with restrictions in applicable laws and employment contracts.

#### **Providing Written Notice of Recall**

Once employees have been selected for recall, employers should notify the employees in writing.

When recalling employees in a unionized workplace, employers should notify employees in accordance with the requirements in the applicable collective agreement. The collective agreement may contain rules regarding the specific form of the notice or the amount of notice that must be provided.

In non-unionized workplaces, the written notice of recall should:

- Clearly state when the employee must return to work;
- Provide information about new health and safety measures; and

- Direct the employee to acknowledge the notice and to either: (a) confirm that they will be returning to work; or (b) identify the reason why they will not be returning to work, and provide that reason before a specified date

#### **Educating Employees on Safety Measures and Policy Updates**

It is important for optical businesses to educate employees on new safety measures and policy updates, before the employees begin to perform their duties. Employers should think about how they will do this, whether through virtual training or otherwise.

### **MANAGING EMPLOYEES WHO ARE UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO RETURN TO WORK**

Some employees may choose not to return for a variety of reasons. The appropriate response will depend on the legitimacy of the employee's reason for not returning to work.

The following discussion addresses some of the common scenarios. However, optical businesses should contact their legal advisor in all circumstances where an employee fails to confirm that they will be returning to work in accordance with the notice of recall.

Legal advisors will be able to develop a strategy and provide an appropriately drafted letter for the employee.

#### **Managing Employees Who Do Not Respond to the Notice of Recall**

An employee may not respond to the notice of recall. It is important to follow-up with the employee, and to properly document the follow-up. An employee might be deemed to have abandoned their employment if they fail to respond to the follow-up inquiry.



## Managing Employees Who Sue for Wrongful or Constructive Dismissal

An employee might sue for wrongful or constructive dismissal instead of returning to work. If this occurs, immediately contact your legal advisor to ensure that you comply with applicable deadlines in the litigation process. Your advisor will also be able to inform you about next steps and legal defences that might be available to defeat the employee's lawsuit.

## Managing Employees Who Would Prefer to Receive Government Benefits

Employees may prefer to receive government benefits instead of working for their income. Unfortunately, employees generally do not have the right to refuse work merely because work is less beneficial than government benefits.

In these circumstances, the employer should inquire into other potential reasons for the employee's refusal to return. It may also be appropriate for the employer to reiterate that the employee will be deemed to have abandoned their employment if they do not return to work and do not provide any other reason to justify a continued absence from work.

## Managing Employees Who Do Not Believe the Workplace is Safe

An employee may refuse to return to work because they do not believe the workplace is safe. Employees are not entitled to remain off work based on a general fear of becoming infected by COVID-19. For example, an employee is not entitled to remain off work because they are scared about taking public transit.

In addition, employees are typically required to be at the workplace to initiate the work refusal process under Part V of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That said, it may be preferable to allow the employee to remain off work to maintain employee morale.

## Managing Employees Who are Entitled to a Leave of Absence

Employees may be entitled to remain off work on a leave of absence. For example, an employee may be entitled to a disability-related leave, an Infectious Disease Emergency Leave or other a leave of absence under the Employment Standards Act, 2000, etc. Employees might also be entitled to a leave of absence or a modified work schedule due to family obligations. It is important to inquire and understand the employee's needs, without over-inquiring and violating the employee's privacy rights.



ANTHONY PANACCI

Anthony Panacci is a lawyer with Filion Wakely Thorup Angeletti LLP, one of Canada's leading management-side labour and employment law firms.

*The information contained in this article is current as of May 15, 2020. Given the rapidly evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the information set out herein may be subject to change. The information contained in this article is provided for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal or other professional advice, nor does accessing this information create a lawyer-client relationship. For clarification, or for legal or other professional assistance, please contact Filion Wakely Thorup Angeletti LLP.*



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## SUMMER

# Vision Care

*With the launch of our podcast and blog series, we want to give OOA members a sneak peek into the content the Summer will bring for vision care.*

### June – Brain Injury & Vision

Every year, nearly 150,000 people sustain some form of brain injury in Canada. It is important for Canadians to recognize how common this type of injury is and what information is available to avoid, mitigate, or recover from the effects of brain injury. As opticians, we will explore this injury from the perspective of vision care practitioners, but to help illustrate the significance of the problem, we will provide some context about brain injuries.

### July – Summer Eye Safety

Ultraviolet exposure and its effect on vision loss and eye damage are well documented. In July, we will be exploring UV safety and other summer eye safety topics. This will include information about proper eyewear and actions that can be taken to reduce the harmful effects of UV. Beyond UV, we'll also talk about how to keep your eyes safe during summer activities such as sports, yard maintenance, and dehydration.

### August – Electronic Devices & Vision

With back-to-school right around the corner, we want our Opticians well equipped to support their communities by exploring vision care as it relates to electronic devices. Blue light, screen time, and much more will be covered during this month.

June – Brain & Vision  
July – Summer Eye Safety  
Aug – Electronic Devices



Ontario  
Opticians  
Association  
FRONTLINE OF VISION CARE

# MAY

is Vision Month

May was Vision Care Month and with Covid-19 there was an added challenge to celebrating the month and delivering the message behind good eye health. The Ontario Opticians Association has taken this challenge as an opportunity to mobilize the messaging and bring our community together across our digital platforms.

We anchored our Vision Care Month messaging to a review of the 5-Year Strategic Plan put forth by the World Health Organization's Eye Health Global Action Plan. The objective of the Plan was to grow eye health evidence, integrate national eye health policies, and create effective partnerships across health professions.

There were several global insights that led to this plan:

- 80% of all causes of visual impairment are preventable or curable.
- Around 285 million people were visually impaired in 2010, with 39 million of them being legally blind.
- Refractive services, such as eyewear, can dramatically improve eye health and reduce vision loss over time.
- 66% of visually impaired people around the world could recover good sight with appropriate access to timely eyewear and other refractive services or cataract surgery.

## What this means for Opticians?

The strong commitments outlined by the WHO, along with Canada's participation, means that greater innovation and empowerment are required to improve patient outcomes. Vision professionals like opticians, are working to build a better, brighter future with less vision loss and greater eye health.

Being on the front line puts opticians in position to deliver helpful advice directly to people who need it most.

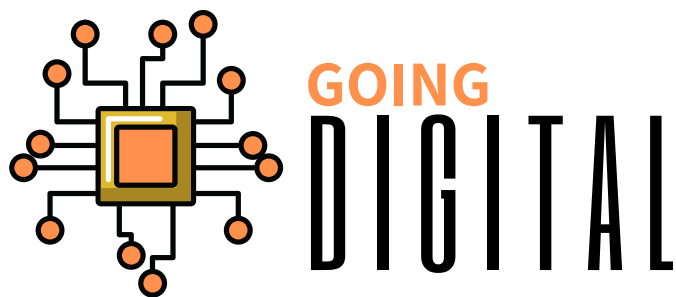


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You may have noticed on our social media channels that we have introduced two new content series. The first is our LetsTalkVisionCare weekly blog articles and the other is the See What We See weekly podcasts. The plan to establish a digital footprint has been in motion since the Fall of 2019 and we are happy to see that it has been well-received by the OOA community.

## PODCASTING

### DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARTIN LEBEAU

Many of you will know that I was not a big social media participant. That fact may now be past tense as I am thrilled to be co-hosting the OOA podcast.

I am pleased to be part of great discourse advancing public awareness on vision health and the role of opticians on vision care's front line. The conversations are engaging, but they are also important. The WHO states it clearly: 80% of vision loss is preventable. What other health condition has that health prevention stat? Let's work together to make a difference: See What We See.

Please tune-in to our weekly podcasts and share them!!

[CLICK HERE!](#)



### See What We See

with Lorne Kashin & Martin Lebeau



The content we are producing and delivering is to build bridges for other health care practitioners to understand how important the role of opticianry is in public health.

We believe that these relationships will give a stronger voice to opticians and result in better patient outcomes. The people we serve in our communities, our patients, are in the forefront of our practice and we are the practitioners serving them on the front line.

### Recap of the bridges we have built for opticianry in Ontario

Being on the front line of vision care puts OOA members in a unique position to bring value to health care in the province.

We believe that we have a leadership role in the health of Ontarians, and we'll build the OOA voice through serving the broader health care community digitally.



Here is what we have done so far to develop interdisciplinary relationships in a digital capacity:

- Launched the See What We See podcast with Lorne Kashin & Martin Lebeau, your Executive & Deputy Executive Directors. Through conversations with various thought leaders, we are putting the opticianry commitment to health on full display.
- The LetsTalkVisionCare blog series. As a tie-in to our podcast, we have authored weekly articles about a variety of health care topics and their relationship to opticianry.
  - Topics so far have included "May is Vision Month", "The WHO 5-Year Global Vision Plan", "Vision & Nutrition", and much more coming your way.

### The future of our digital effort

We want to continue to give you a voice in provincial health care. Being on the front line can be an underappreciated job, but a critically important one for the communities we serve. By building strong bonds with other leaders in health care, we will grow the recognition of opticians making Canadians healthier.

Thanks to your support, our blog and podcast series launches have been a success with seemingly no limit to how far we can go in delivering the OOA message. Thank you for your commitment to building bridges.

Thank you for your work on the front line of vision care.

*“OOAs Instagram community grew by 30+ followers during the first three weeks of the digital campaign. 90% of them are vision care professionals. Impact!!”*



Ontario  
Opticians  
ASSOCIATION

# Specialty Symposium

2020

RICHMOND HILL

Proud Partners  Optical Group  
Looking out for you

With the continuing uncertainty caused by COVID-19, it is difficult to project how, when, or if, there will be a return to normalcy.

This has been challenging both personally and professionally for each of our members. To assist with the transition the OOA is been committed to digital mobilization.

Although the situation is ongoing and there is constant reassessment based on directives outlined by national and provincial governments, there is anticipation that in-person events and conferences will not exist in the same form they did before the pandemic.

While we were pleased many converted their Inside Optics registration to a “free” virtual learning approach to our premier event, many of you found e-learning a challenge. In response to this, we are preparing to support Continuing Education credits in a virtual environment.

The Association has been building confidence and aptitude in digital and virtual communication and we will keep members updated with how credits will be earned going forward. As we remain connected to the evolving situation, we are committed to keeping you, the OOA members, informed about what to expect next.

We are also exploring how to make it more interactive. Stay tuned

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College of  
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## COVID - 19 UPDATE

### AMENDED DIRECTIVE #2 ALLOWING GRADUAL RETURN TO PRACTICE

*May 26, 2020 – 9:00 pm*

Today the Chief Medical Officer of Health has revoked Directive #2 (issued March 19, 2020), which limited health care professionals to essential or emergency services.

In its place, an amended Directive #2 has been issued, which allows for a gradual restart of health care services in accordance with the College's Return to Practice Guidelines and the Ministry of Health's Health Sector Restart Requirements.

In addition to the Guidelines set out by the College, in order to begin offering care to patients, the Ministry requires health care professionals to:

- Complete enhanced COVID-19 screening of patients before every patient interaction, using a point of care risk assessment.
- Use a surgical mask and perform hand hygiene before and after all interactions with and within 2 metres of patients who screen negative. Use of eye protection should also be considered.
- Use full PPE to minimize droplet and contact for patients who screen positive. The College recommends that Opticians defer non-urgent vision care until the patient is well.

The College's Guidelines have been updated on May 26, consistent with these Ministry requirements. Even if you have already familiarized yourself with the College's guidelines, it is important that you review the guidelines again; the changes have been highlighted in the document.

To promote continued physical distancing, opticians are encouraged to offer remote or virtual services, or to modify delivery of care consistent with the Standards of Practice, where possible. Opticians should determine which services can be safely carried out in-person, based on the following principles:

- Considering real or anticipated capacities to provide the service.
- Minimizing harm to patients and whether a delay in the service would cause the patient's eye health or ability to function to considerably decline if service was not provided.
- Treating all patients with the same clinical needs in the same way and ensuring that provision of care decisions do not further disadvantage already vulnerable patients.
- Ensuring patients/patient populations who have been burdened by limited health care services have the ability to have their vision care monitored and to receive appropriate care and follow up.

We'd like to hear from you on whether you are ready to gradually restart your practice.

Kind regards,

Fazal and the COO Team

**To read more COO's updates  
about Covid-19, Please Click Here**

- General Information
- Face Shields & Masks
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- Links & Resources

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