

2026

MLA Meeting Q&A

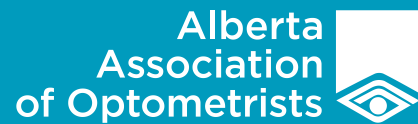
A document to assist Government Relations Committee members with fielding questions a Member of the Legislative Assembly may have.



QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Why do you want to meet?	• Awareness: I want to inform you about how optometrists are integral in Alberta's health care system and also what more we can be doing to improve patient outcomes and increase efficiencies for government in health care delivery. • Health Outcomes: Vision care is an essential element of health. When it starts to fail other, more costly and more troublesome issues often follow. Eye health is linked to issues like school performance; absenteeism, unemployment, preventable injury, depression, isolation and loneliness. Those are costly in more ways than one. Optometrists are critical to better health outcomes.
What is a Doctor of Optometry?	• We're an Allied Health Care Provider. Government covers the cost of most of our services for seniors, people under 19, social services clients and urgent cases. • For education we all have an undergraduate degree and a four-year doctorate. • We're regulated under the Health Professions Act and governed by the Alberta College of Optometrists. • Alberta has more than 900 optometrists in 128 communities across the province. We're all business owners, and most of us are open 6 or 7 days a week.
What do optometrists do?	• We do more than 80% of comprehensive eye exams in the province and detect and treat about a dozen conditions including cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration. • We also have approval to remove foreign objects from eyes - which a lot of people don't know, and which is where we can really help take pressure of emergency rooms. • We can prescribe Schedule 1 and 2 drugs, order and analyze lab tests and ultrasound imaging. • We have the technology and training to detect conditions like hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer through an eye exam.



QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
How does spending on optometry in Alberta compare to other provinces in Canada?	• Since 2014 our doctors have had only two 1 percent increases, while inflation during the same time period has increased by more than 27%. We love working with our patients, but we also want to be fairly compensated for our services. • Government of Alberta has used some of the oldest or lowest fees in the past making it not an apples-to-apples comparison. • Because our scope of practice in Alberta, procedures we perform on our patients (and managed by us), are referred to ophthalmologists in other provinces. Thus, our costs here would be in the medical budgets of other provinces.
How can optometry save the health care system money?	• Optometrists deliver essential, front-line eye care in communities across Alberta. They play a key role in prevention, early detection, and keeping care local providing a buffer for Alberta's strained health care system. • Urgent treatment at optometry clinics has helped reduced ER visits seven of the past nine years. (AB Primary and Preventative Health Services data) • Optometrists provide some of the lowest cost-per-patient (\$104) among physicians and allied health care providers. (Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan 2021/2022).
Where do you fit in the health care system?	• We are an early and often first detector of eye health diseases. • We deliver patient centered, cost effective care and collaborate with ophthalmologists, family physicians, nurse practitioners and other allied health care providers. • We're an alternative to emergency rooms because we can treat most of the urgent eye health issues that present at hospitals.
Is optometry only publicly funded?	• Optometrists straddle the public and private system and are small business owners creating jobs in their local communities.



**Thank you for being a member
of the Alberta Association of
Optometrists**



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