



Alberta
Association
of Optometrists



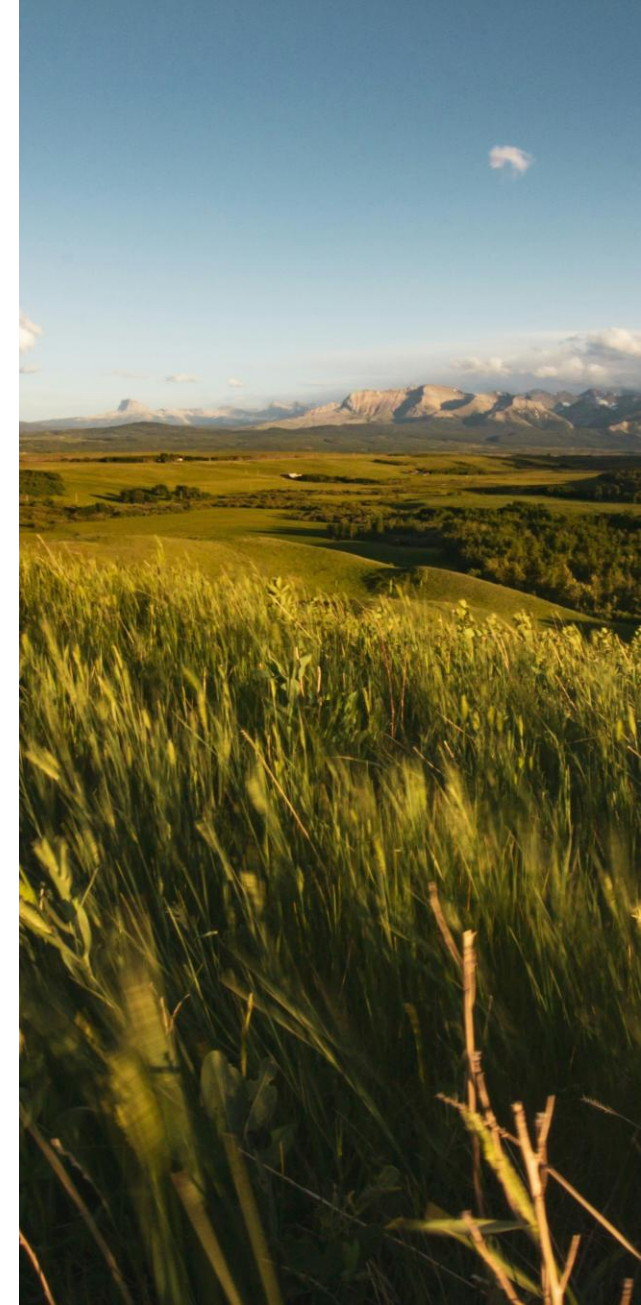
Welcome!

Government Relations Committee

June 15, 2026



Land Acknowledgement








Agenda

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|---|--|
| 1 Opening | <i>Bart Muusse, AAO</i> |
| 2 AAO Message & Committee Overview | <i>Dr. Gabrielle Betts, AAO</i> |
| 3 Engagement with Elected Officials | <i>Andre Corbould, Integrated Strategic Partners</i> |
| 4 Social Media | <i>Kegan Machado, ZAG</i> |
| 5 Next steps | <i>Dr. Gabrielle Betts, AAO</i> |
| 6 Question & Answer | <i>All</i> |
| 7 Closing | <i>Dr. Gabrielle Betts, AAO</i> |



Committee Overview

Insights and updates from the CEO on government relations and advocacy

-  Track record of raising the profile of vision care in Alberta's health care system
-  Filling in gaps in governments evidence base
-  Opportunities to engage





Re-engaging the Committee

Purpose of GRC Meeting

To work with doctors of optometry as key contributors bringing frontline clinical insight to healthcare policy discussions in Alberta.

Value of Clinical Experience

Real-world experiences highlight patient challenges, access gaps, and opportunities to enhance healthcare outcomes.

Advocacy Through Relationships

Effective advocacy depends on trusted relationships with MLAs, consistent communication, and shared understanding among stakeholders.

Re-engagement and Capacity Building

The meeting aims to re-engage members, boost advocacy confidence, and provide practical communication guidance.





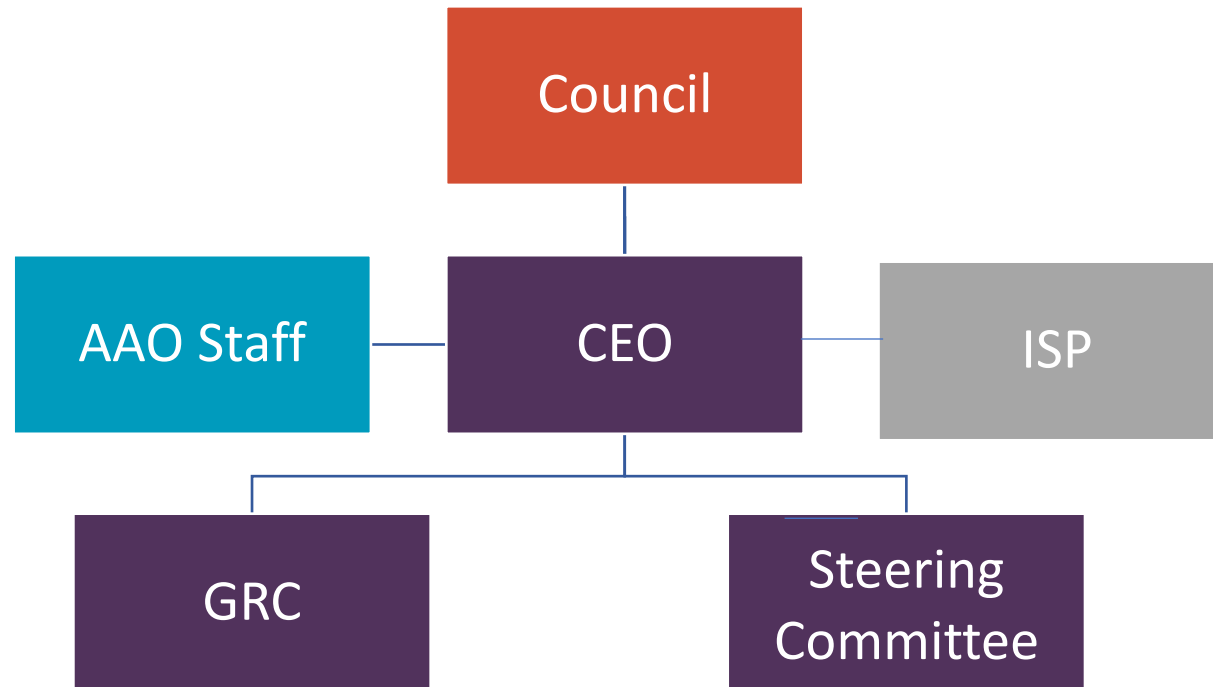
Why engagement matters now

- Strategic Timing for Advocacy
 - Summer provides a crucial period when MLAs hear from constituents, influencing fall discussions and budget planning.
- Supporting Master Service Agreement
 - Engagement helps advocate for an agreement that provides fair funding and ensures quality eye care access.
- Preparing for Provincial Election
 - Relationship-building raises awareness and positions optometry in primary care and health care discussions before political campaigns intensify.





New Committee Structure



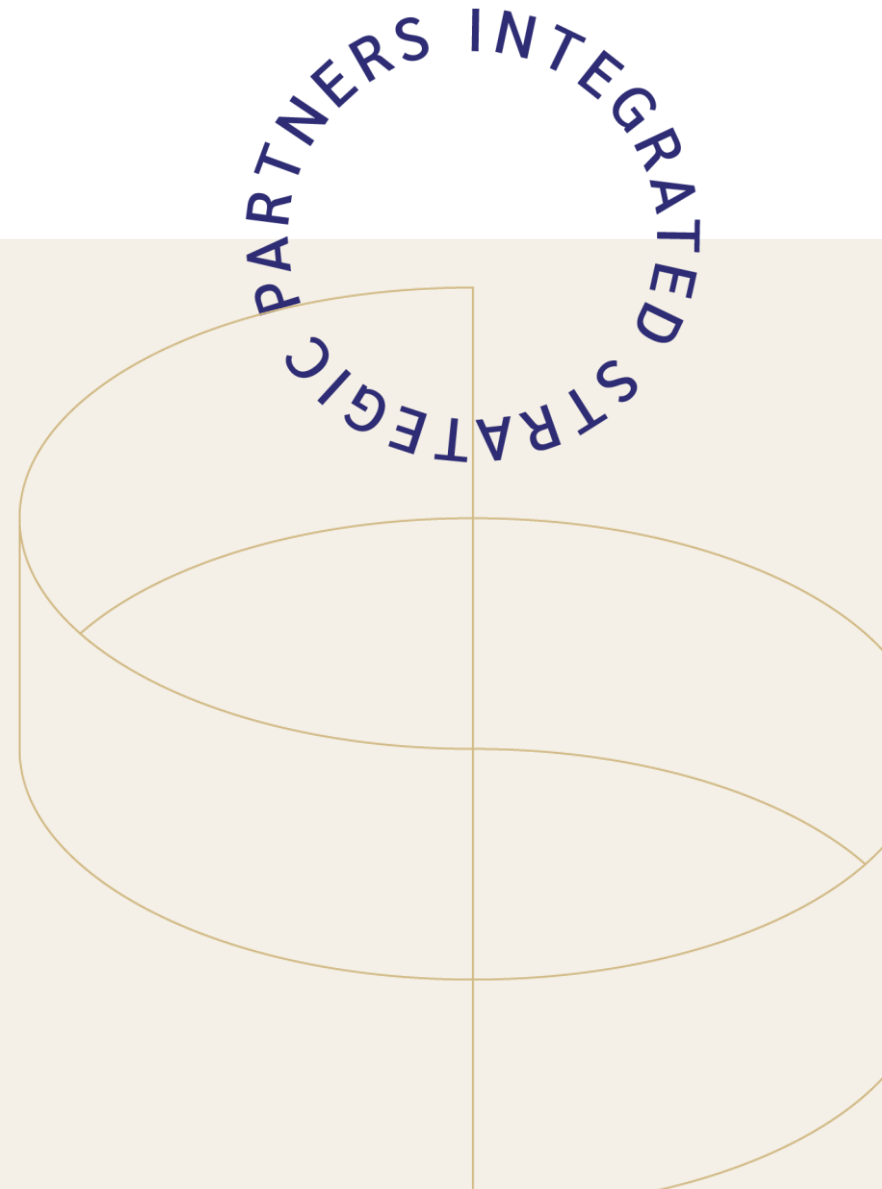
If you are interested in joining the steering committee e-mail: bmuusse@optometrists.ab.ca



Engaging Government in Alberta

A Government Relations Playbook for the Alberta Association of Optometrists

Andre Corbould | Managing Partner



Our Objective & How to Use This Playbook

The goal is a signed, modernized Master Service Agreement. Beneath it sit three connected objectives.



01

Build a stable framework

A modernized Master Service Agreement (MSA) with indexing, dispute resolution, and multi-year stability so this issue does not recur.



02

Support Advanced Scope

Growing the base of support for the Government of Alberta to expand scope of practice for Doctors of Optometry



03

Show political capacity

Demonstrate that optometry can mobilize, build coalitions, and sustain pressure, strengthening every future file.

How to use this deck: a primer on how Alberta's government works and how to engage it for the MSA campaign.

SECTION ONE

How Government Works in Alberta

*The Westminster system, the current Legislature,
and why the structure shapes how we advocate.*

The Two Halves of Government



The Elected Side

Politicians who set direction

- Premier, Cabinet, and all 87 MLAs: accountable to voters.
- Set policy priorities and approve spending.
- Respond to constituents and caucus pressure.
- Our target: Minister Wright and government MLAs.



The Non-Elected Side

Public servants who deliver

- Deputy Ministers, ADMs, and the public service.
- Provide continuity and technical advice.
- Draft options and brief the Minister on the file.
- Shape what is possible before decisions are made.

Effective advocacy works both halves, win the politics and equip the public service.

The Current Legislature

UCP

majority government

87

seats (MLAs)

Why this shapes our strategy

- A majority means the government can pass its agenda thus pressure must come from within government caucus.
- Caucus MLAs are our most valuable allies: they can raise the Master Service Agreement in caucus and write Minister Wright directly.
- Opposition MLAs add public pressure in Question Period but have less direct influence.

Where the pressure flows

PRIMARY TARGET

Minister Justin Wright

ADJACENT TARGETS

Provincial Cabinet

OUR ALLIES: HIGHEST LEVERAGE

Government Caucus MLAs

THE CAMPAIGN STARTS HERE

Optometrists & Constituents

960+ optometrists in 120+ Alberta communities, every MLA has constituents who can engage.

SECTION TWO

Key Structures, Personnel & Dynamics

*Who holds power, who shapes the file, and where
the MSA decision actually gets made.*

Cabinet, the Premier's Office & Treasury Board

Cabinet sets policy direction but any spending commitment, including a renewed MSA, must clear Treasury Board.



Premier's Office

Sets the political environment and overall priorities. Shapes whether a file like the MSA gets cabinet-level attention.



Cabinet

Collective decision-making body of ministers. Approves policy direction and the priorities that become budget commitments.



Treasury Board

Signs off on any fiscal commitment. No new optometry funding moves without Treasury Board approval.

What this means for AAO: Minister Wright owns the decision operationally, but the fiscal sign-off sits with Treasury Board, so the case must be both clinical and financial.

The Ministry That Owns Our File



Hon. Justin Wright

Minister of Primary & Preventative
Health Services

PRIMARY CAMPAIGN TARGET

Where the file sits today

Optometry is one of several provider files the Ministry manages alongside its larger primary-care reform agenda. Our job is to make this file a top-tier priority.

Our strongest argument: align with MAPS

Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System (MAPS) is the government's flagship reform. A renewed MSA strengthens community-based primary eye care and eases pressure on ERs and specialists, advancing the government's own goals.

The Non-Elected Side: Who Moves the File

Ministers decide, but two non-elected groups shape what reaches the Minister's desk, need to know both.



The Public Service

Permanent, non-partisan, stays across governments

- Deputy Minister (DM): the Ministry's top bureaucrat, owns implementation
- Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs): lead policy areas and shape the file's technical detail
- They brief the Minister on options and feasibility, our evidence must survive their scrutiny



The Minister's Political Staff

Partisan, appointed, manage politics & relationships

- Chief of Staff: runs the office and controls the Minister's priorities
- Press Secretary: manages messaging and media exposure
- Policy advisors: the day-to-day contacts who manage stakeholders like us

Takeaway: build relationships with policy advisors and credibility with the public service, both gatekeep the Minister.

SECTION THREE

Advocacy & Lobbying Basics

What lobbying really is, how to be a credible resource, and the steps that turn a meeting into a result.



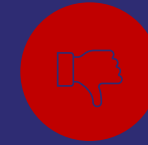
What Lobbying Is and the Rules That Govern It

Lobbying is simply communicating with public office holders to influence a decision. In Alberta it is regulated by the Lobbyists Act.



DO

- Be honest, specific, and concise
- Lead with patient and constituency impact
- Offer to be an ongoing resource
- Leave behind the Fast Facts document
- Follow up and report back to the AAO



DON'T

- Overstate the ask or exaggerate data
- Make it purely about optometrists' incomes
- Surprise the MLA and send materials ahead
- Burn the relationship over one meeting
- Forget to register if thresholds apply

Being a Credible Resource

MLAs trust people who bring them useful facts. These are the numbers that make our case: specific, clinical, and politically usable.

80%

of Alberta's primary vision & eye-health care

1.5M+

patients served per year

\$104

cost per patient, lowest of all AHCIP providers

960+

optometrists in 120+ communities

99%

of clinics offer same-day emergency appointments

2,300

free eyeglasses/year to kindergarteners (Eye See Eye Learn)

Urgent care at optometry clinics has reduced ER visits in 7 of the past 9 years, a MAPS-aligned, cost-saving story.

Steps to Success: The Approach

Each member runs the same five-step play. The cumulative effect of many MLAs writing the Minister is what moves the file.

1

Prepare

Read the Instruction Guide & Key Messages. Customize the Draft MLA Email.

2

Request the meeting

Email your constituency MLA to book a short meeting.

3

Meet & brief

Make the case using Fast Facts as the leave-behind.

4

Hand over the letter

Present the MLA Support Letter for the MLA to send to Minister Wright.

5

Amplify & report

Post on LinkedIn, then report the outcome to the AAO.

The MLA Support Letter is the engine: every signed letter is a correspondence-file entry that builds pressure on the Minister from inside his own caucus.

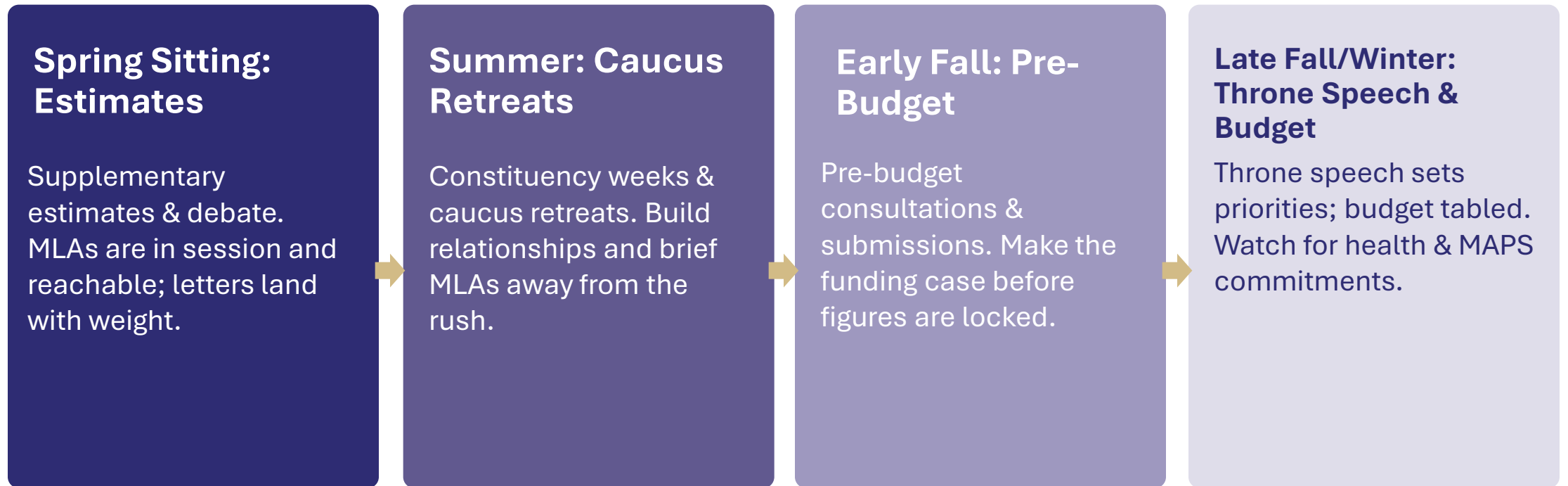
SECTION FOUR

Timing & Stakeholders

When to act, and who can amplify the ask beyond optometry.

Time the Ask to the Decision Cycle

Government decides at predictable moments. Sequence activity against these windows rather than at uniform intensity year-round.



The strongest pressure peaks before the budget when the Minister and Treasury Board are still setting numbers.

The 2026 Sessional Calendar

Yellow blocks indicate in-session periods. **Blue blocks** indicate constituency weeks when the Assembly is adjourned. **Green blocks** indicate holidays, and **red blocks** indicate Christmas closure.



Sitting hours: Mon–Wed 1:30–6:00 p.m.; Thu 1:30–4:30 p.m. (Standing Order 3(9)).

Build the Coalition

A profession advocating for itself is discounted as self-interest. The same case carries far more weight when allies make it too.

AB Diabetes Association

Diabetic retinopathy screening keeps eyes and the health system healthier.

Rural Municipalities & Mayors

Clinic access is most fragile in rural Alberta, their constituents lose first.

School Boards

Eye See Eye Learn gives ~2,300 kindergarteners free glasses each year.

Chambers & Small Business

Optometry clinics are small businesses employing Albertans in 120+ communities.

Seniors & Indigenous Health

Higher diabetes and vision-loss prevalence make eye care essential.

Coalition partners turn an optometry ask into a community health and access ask.

SECTION FIVE

Issues of the Day

The political environment our ask must move through.



Issues in Alberta Politics

- 1 Alberta separation referendum
- 2 Federal-provincial relations
- 3 Cabinet shuffle
- 4 Health system crisis
- 5 October referendum: immigration & constitutional reform



SECTION SIX

Engaging Your MLA

Three ways to reach your MLA, how to run the meeting, and what to do before you walk in.



Three Ways to Reach Your MLA

Where you meet your MLA shapes the conversation. Pick the setting that fits your ask.



Constituency Office

In your community

- Most accessible, every MLA has one in the riding.
- Best for first meetings and local relationship-building.
- Bring the Fast Facts and a local clinic story.
- Dress & Etiquette: least formal



Legislature Office

At the Legislature

- Reach them during sitting weeks (see the calendar).
- Conversations skew toward policy and caucus business.
- Useful once the relationship is established.
- Dress & Etiquette: formal



As a Minister

If they hold a portfolio

- A Minister wears two hats, constituency MLA and Cabinet.
- Engage them as your local MLA first.
- Ministerial correspondence carries added weight.
- Dress & Etiquette: most formal

In the Room: Running a Great MLA Meeting



Before you go

- Book early, aim for a constituency week when MLAs are home.
- Know your MLA: party, committees, and any health interests.
- Bring the Fast Facts leave-behind and the MLA Support Letter.
- Dress business professional, you represent the profession.



In the meeting

- Lead with the local impact on their constituents and clinics.
- Keep it short with one clear ask: write Minister Wright to complete the MSA.
- Offer to be a year-round resource on eye-health questions.
- Confirm next step and leave the support letter behind.

Always follow up: post on LinkedIn, then report the outcome to the AAO so we can track every commitment.



Thank You.

Andre Corbould | Managing Partner
acorbould@ispartnersinc.com
(780) 777-8275
ispartnersinc.com





AAO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE WEBINAR

Social Media Best Practices

Sharing your MLA meetings the right way

Kegan Machado · Social Media Coordinator, zag creative

HOW IT WORKS

From meeting to post

The AAO posts from its account. Your job is the photo and the reshare.



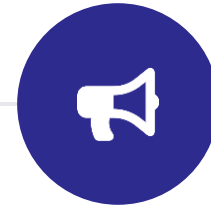
Meet your MLA



Take a photo



**Submit to AAO
(within 24 hrs)**



AAO posts it



You reshare

WHY IT MATTERS

Sharing these moments raises optometry's profile, strengthens our advocacy, and keeps the profession visible and connected with decision-makers.

STEP 1

Always ask permission first

Before the photo, and before it's shared, get a clear yes from the MLA and anyone else in frame.

SOMETHING YOU CAN SAY

“Would you mind if we take a quick photo to share on social media that we met today?”

STEP 2

Taking a strong photo

- ✓ Good, even light: face a window, avoid backlight
- ✓ Hold the phone level, frame at eye height
- ✓ Keep the background clean and uncluttered
- ✓ Take a few, then pick the best one later

WHAT TO DO



STEP 3

Dress for the photo



It's going public, so business casual reads well online.

STEP 4

Submitting to the AAO

 Send your photo and meeting details within 24 hours. Sooner is better.

Who

What

When

Where

Outcome

Photo

Email your photo and details directly to Sabrina at the AAO, slicata@optometrists.ab.ca.

STEP 5

Reshare & engage



LinkedIn

Alberta Association of Optometrists

- Tap Repost on the AAO's post
- Add a short note and tag the MLA



Instagram

@aao_optometrists

- Share the AAO's post to your Story
- Tag the AAO and the MLA

QUICK TIPS

- Reshare soon after the AAO posts, while it's timely
- Tagging the MLA helps them see it and reshare too
- On LinkedIn, add a short, friendly note in your own words

THE 5-POINT CHECKLIST

Before you post, run this list

- ✓ Ask permission before the photo
- ✓ Good light, level frame, clean background
- ✓ Business casual, since you're on camera
- ✓ Send to the AAO within 24 hours
- ✓ Reshare on LinkedIn & Instagram, tag the MLA



Post Committee Meeting Action Items

1. Review GRC website for toolkit and information
2. Wait for AAO E-mail instruction prior to MLA engagement
3. Schedule your meeting and/or attend an event
4. Provide AAO with post event information
5. GRC Steering Committee meeting early fall
6. Fall 2026 GRC Committee meeting
 - Updates and report from summer engagement
 - Strategies and engagement going forward

GRC Website





Question & Answer





Thank you!

Questions or Comments: bmuusse@optometrists.ab.ca