ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS

Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting
Meeting Minutes
November 16-17, 2025
Toronto Marriott City Centre
1 Blue Jays Way

SUNDAY, November 16, 2025

Attendance

Directors: Drs. Shaina Nensi (President), Virginia Donati (Vice-President), Pasquale Vecchio (Treasurer), Tyler Brown, Krista Bruni, Krupa Chothani, Kristin Heeney, Katie Ryan, Linda Sharma, Kulvir Singh, Bridget Valsamis, Todd Wilbee

OAO Staff: Mark Donnison (CEO), Celecia Partap (Director, Marketing and Communications), Cheryl Neave (Education Program Manager), Danielle Bimmer (Administrative Coordinator), Bill Vardy (Technical Support)

Guests: Dr. Ben Thompson (Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science), Scott Ferguson (Progress Consulting), Kate Polek (Recording Secretary)

Regrets: Dagmar Hindrichs (Recording Secretary)

1.0 Call to Order / Approval of Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 am by the President, Dr. Shaina Nensi.

Motion #1: It was moved by Dr. Virgina Donati and seconded by Dr. Bridget Valsamis to approve the agenda.

CARRIED

Dr. Shaina Nensi welcomed board guest Dr. Ben Thompson.

2.0 Approval of Meeting Minutes

2.1 Review and approval of August 17-18, 2025 regular and Board of Directors (BOD) meeting minutes

Motion #2: It was moved by Dr. Pasquale Vecchio and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to approve the August 17-18, 2025 Board of Directors regular meeting minutes as presented.

CARRIED

Motion #3: It was moved by Dr. Tyler Brown and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

The August 16-17 F25 BOD in-camera meeting minutes were approved by consensus as amended.

3.0 2026-2028 Strategic Plan Discussion

3.1 2026-2028 Strategic Plan

Mark Donnison, CEO, presented the final draft of the Strategic Plan 2026-2028 which incorporates previous board input and highlights four key pillars: unity, advocacy, influence, and insight. The Plan features defined goals, initial key performance indicators (KPIs), and an implementation framework aimed at supporting execution and accountability. A master calendar was introduced to align strategic priorities, operational activities, and budget planning, with further refinements and KPI development anticipated over time. Committee planning and staff resource alignment were marked for additional development.

It was noted that the new Strategic Plan is structured to remain flexible and adapt to the evolving needs of the organization.

3.2 2026 Operating Plan

The 2026 Operating Plan was presented as a master calendar to align priorities and ensure clarity across teams. The board discussed integrating committee work plans and budgets into this calendar, emphasizing that only listed items will be prioritized. This method also improves performance management by linking deliverables to expectations.

It was noted that the Strategic Plan rollout is set for later this month, featuring a President's video, media release, stakeholder communications, and website launch. The board was asked to formally endorse both the plan and rollout strategy.

Motion #6: It was moved by Dr. Tyler Brown and seconded by Dr. Krista Bruni to approve the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan rollout as presented.

CARRIED

Scott Ferguson joined the meeting.

4.0 Board Development Committee

4.1 Board Self-Assessment review

Scott Ferguson, Progress Consulting, guided a review of the 2025 Board Self-Assessment, highlighting survey results, a strategic workshop, and board competencies. The assessment added 18 new culture questions, with responses indicating clear progress. Key areas for improvement include better use of committees and staff, enhanced financial literacy, and stronger strategic thinking and communication.

Breakout sessions generated actionable steps to be reported to the Board Development Committee. The meeting ended with a focus on essential board competencies, stressing the value of governance skills and foundational attributes, while noting that functional expertise can be further developed through staff training.

Scott Ferguson left the meeting.

Motion #7: It was moved by Dr. Kulvir Singh and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to accept the Board Self-Assessment Report as presented.

CARRIED

4.2 Board Development Committee (BDC) Report

BDC Chair, Linda Sharma, presented the BDC Report. The board discussed adopting the *Plus Delta* short meeting evaluation method as an efficient feedback tool to enhance ongoing board effectiveness. Clarifications were given about its purpose, usage, and implementation process.

Motion #8: It was moved by Dr. Tyler Brown and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to adopt the *Plus Delta* short meeting evaluation protocol effective immediately, through to the end of the current term.

CARRIED

The board reviewed the proposed *Election Info-Guide: Thinking of Running for the OAO Board of Directors?*. Discussion ensued regarding the content of this document in relation to the intent, the level of information required, the tone of the document, and overlap with other materials being reviewed in this section of the meeting. The extent of changes introduced in comparison to the original document issued last year were also discussed.

Motion #9: It was moved by Dr. Kristin Heeney and seconded by Dr. Linda Sharma to adopt the updated *Election Info- Guide* and publish it in all proposed media as presented.

DEFEATED

1-ACTION: BDC to revise the *Election Info-Guide* based on board feedback and submit it to the Executive Committee for approval ahead of the upcoming election cycle.

As part of the annual process for the election of the Board of Directors, the Board Development Committee updated the *Membership Survey* that is issued to members to identify critical issues pertinent to the OAO. The board endorsed the *Membership Survey* as presented in Appendix D for the Nominee Election Platform.

Motion #10: It was moved by Dr. Pasquale Vecchio and seconded by Dr. Bridget Valsamis to endorse the *Membership Survey* in Appendix D as presented for the election nominee platform.

CARRIED

The draft *Board Orientation & Reference Guide* table of contents was presented, and directors were asked to suggest additions based on their onboarding experience. The board asked the BDC to review current materials, eliminate redundancies, and organize board-facing documents effectively.

2-ACTION: BDC to assess the current state of orientation and reference documents, identify gaps and redundancies, and return with a proposed framework for board consideration.

Cheryl Neave joined the meeting.

5.0 Symposium Update

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5.1 Continuing Education Working Group (CEWG) Report

Dr. Krupa Chothani, CEWG Chair, presented the CEWG Report.

Motion #11: It was moved by Dr. Todd Wilbee and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to approve the CEWG Report.

CARRIED

5.2 2026 Symposium outline and budget

Cheryl Neave, Education Program Manager, presented the proposed 2026 Symposium budget, outlining fixed and variable costs and projected revenues. The board discussed maintaining the Early Bird Rate at $879 with a target of 300 OD delegates, as well as the possibility of a rate increase.

After further deliberation, the board approved increasing the Early Bird Rate to $997, which will result in a regular registration rate of $1107, while retaining the target of 300 OD delegates. The Board decided other registration rates post-Early Bird would be adjusted accordingly as well.

Motion #12: It was moved by Dr. Virginia Donati and seconded by Dr. Tyler Brown to set the 2026 Symposium Early Bird registration rate at $997, increase the regular registration rate to $1107, and maintain a target of 300 OD delegates in the budget.

CARRIED

5.3 Symposium future years

The board discussed upcoming Symposium planning, noting that contracts with the Sheraton have been finalized for 2027 & 2029. They considered alternative venues, such as Kitchener and Collingwood, which may provide more cost-effective options. While changing the venue is unlikely to have a major impact on the budget, the board also talked about factors like event duration and CE hour requirements. It was agreed that details regarding the 2030 and 2031 Symposiums will be presented by May 2026.

Motion #13: It was moved by Dr. Krupa Chothani and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to confirm the 2028 Symposium location as Bingemans in Kitchener.

CARRIED

Cheryl Neave left the meeting.

6.0 Marketing and Communications Update

6.1 Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC) Report

Todd Wilbee, CMC Chair, presented the CMC Report. He updated members on recent initiatives such as the *Visionary Voices* rollout, noting better engagement and faster content turnaround. The meeting reviewed content effectiveness and performance for both new and existing materials. The process to confirm a vendor to assist with a new signature campaign aimed at enhancing content quality and performance was also confirmed.

Motion #14: It was moved by Dr. Kulvir Singh and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to accept the Communications and Marketing Committee Report.

CARRIED

6.2 Branding refresh

Celicia Partap, Director, Marketing and Communications, presented OAO's updated brand strategy aiming to improve visual identity, tone, and digital presence. The initiative seeks to contribute to OAO's position and align with strategic goals. A finalized brand guide will support rollout, with future updates linked to broader feedback.

Motion #15: It was moved by Dr. Virginia Donati and seconded by Dr. Kulvir Singh to proceed with the branding refresh as presented.

CARRIED

6.3 Public-facing website redesign

The updated public-facing website is scheduled to launch in November 2025, in conjunction with the introduction of the new strategic plan. Website enhancements will be reviewed on a three-year cycle, and broader brand elements, such as the logo, may be reconsidered in subsequent strategic planning phases.

Motion #16: It was moved by Dr. Krupa Chothani and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to proceed with the launch of the new OAO public-facing website in November 2025, as presented.

CARRIED

7.0 General Committee Topics

7.1 Proposed committee meeting timelines

The board reviewed a proposed standardized timeline for committee meetings designed to enhance consistency and accountability across all committees. The proposed framework establishes clear timelines for scheduling meetings, distributing materials at least one week prior, and publishing minutes promptly. This approach seeks to provide committee members with sufficient preparation time and to align committee outputs with board reporting schedules. The new process will be implemented and periodically reassessed as necessary.

Motion #17: It was moved by Dr. Todd Wilbee and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to adopt the proposed Committee meeting timelines as presented.

CARRIED

Dr. Ben Thompson, Mark Donnison, Celecia Partap, Danielle Bimmer, Bill Vardy, and Kate Polek left the meeting.

7.2 Committee expectations

The board discussed committee expectations.

Motion #18: It was moved by Dr. Katie Ryan and seconded by Dr. Krupa Chothani to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by the President at 5:38 pm at the conclusion of business.

Adjourn, *to resume Monday, November 17th at 9:00 am.*

Meeting resumes to

MONDAY, November 17, 2025

Attendance

Directors: Drs. Shaina Nensi (President), Virginia Donati (Vice-President), Pasquale Vecchio (Treasurer), Tyler Brown, Krista Bruni, Krupa Chothani, Kristin Heeney, Katie Ryan, Kulvir Singh, Bridget Valsamis, Todd Wilbee

OAO Staff: Mark Donnison (CEO), Celecia Partap (Director, Marketing and Communications), Kanan Shah (Senior Finance Manager), Danielle Bimmer (Administrative Coordinator), Dagmar Hindrichs (Recording Secretary), Bill Vardy (Technical Support)

Guests: Conal Slobodin, Alexandra Hubbert (Crestview Strategy)

Regrets: Dr. Ben Thompson (Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science)

Meeting Resumes, Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 am by the President.

MOTION #20: It was moved by Dr. Tyler Brown and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

10.2 Overview of government relations strategy

Conal Slobodin and Alexandra Hubbert from Crestview Strategy (CS) presented an update on OAO's government relations for the OHIP negotiations:

- CS shared their strategic approach and recent developments, highlighting ongoing efforts to align with OAO's goals and adapt to changing circumstances.
- They emphasized regular engagement with important government stakeholders and reported on recent interactions with key officials.
- The team outlined upcoming activities to support the Association's interests and stressed getting members involved in advocacy.
- Government prefers collaborative solutions over service withdrawal, and providing solid data is essential for effective discussions.
- CS showcased the campaign landing page, current ads, and plans to expand public awareness and advocacy.
- Directors or members with contacts among Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) are encouraged to connect with Crestview for assistance in government outreach.

MOTION #22: It was moved by Dr. Virginia Donati and seconded by Dr. Pasquale Vecchio to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

MOTION #24: It was moved by Dr. Katie Ryan and seconded by Dr. Bridget Valsamis to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

11.0 Update on Scope

The President provided an update regarding the ongoing scope expansion efforts. An overview of significant meetings with the Ministry of Health (MOH) was provided, detailing the progression of proposals and negotiations:

- 2 October: The MOH delivered a counter proposal to the Committee, initiating further discussion on the scope of practice.
- 28 October: The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) responded by submitting its own counter proposal, reflecting the Association's priorities and feedback from members.
- 28 November: The MOH is expected to provide a new counter proposal, marking the next step in the negotiation process.

The CEO noted high response rates in Ministry consultations and emphasized the importance of continuing to build and strengthen grassroots involvement across the membership.

The report also recognized an increase in student participation within the Association, reflecting growing interest and commitment from the next generation of practitioners. Supporting this, survey data was referenced that shows members expressing a preference for expanding patient access, aligning with the broader goals of scope expansion.

Discussion further centred on the importance of collaborating with both the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) and Alberta colleagues. Such partnerships are considered vital for enhancing educational advocacy, particularly in light of opposition from ophthalmology groups regarding scope expansion. To address these challenges, the board considered the need for tailored communications directed at specific target audiences, ensuring clear and effective messaging throughout the process.

12.0 Political Action Committee (PAC)

12.1 Political Action Committee update

Dr. Krista Bruni, PAC Chair, presented the PAC Report. The presentation highlighted several key strategies aimed at increasing member engagement and improving communication efforts, particularly within priority ridings.

During the discussion, it was observed that the current operations of the PAC do not fully correspond with its established Terms of Reference (TOR). The TOR were originally designed to foster grassroots advocacy initiatives; however, alignment with these objectives has become inconsistent over time. In light of this, the board considered updating the TOR, with a comprehensive review to be presented at the February board meeting.

The potential dissolution of the PAC was also discussed. If dissolved, its primary duties would be reassigned to the CEO, as ongoing challenges have impacted the effectiveness of Committee communications. Despite these discussions, the CEO expressed clear support for the continued existence of the PAC and recommended a phased approach to Committee growth, contingent on the resources available.

Board members were encouraged to proactively contact their respective MPPs and to update the Association's Facebook page as part of broader advocacy efforts. The topic of Committee alignment was also addressed, but after deliberation, the related draft motion was deferred for future consideration.

MOTION #26: It was moved by Dr. Linda Sharma and seconded by Dr. Bridget Valsamis to approve the Political Action Committee Report.

CARRIED

13.0 2025 - 2026 Projects

13.1 Fee Guide

Fee Guide Vendor Relationship Update

The CEO reported that the relationship with the previous fee guide vendor has officially concluded. This action satisfies an outstanding item from the last board meeting, ensuring closure on the matter of vendor engagement.

In addition, the CEO confirmed that alternative paths have been explored and viable options are available for consideration.

Review of Fee Guide Management Approaches

The CEO provided an overview of how fee guides are managed by other associations. Typically, these organizations handle their fee guides internally and treat them as status updates. However, it was noted that such an approach may not be suitable for insurers and could potentially raise issues, signalling the need for further consideration.

13.2 National / CAO Insurance Program update

The CEO provided an update on the National / CAO Insurance Program. It was reported that a recent rate increase within the program has been addressed with members. Based on current analysis, the CEO recommended that the Association retain participation in the program for an additional year before revisiting the program.

MOTION #27: It was moved by Dr. Katie Ryan and seconded by Dr. Kulvir Singh to remain with the current national program.

CARRIED

3-ACTION: Staff to evaluate the advisability of terminating this relationship and withdrawing from the program, assess the potential value of available alternatives, and submit their recommendations to the board.

13.3 IT modernization

Celicia Partap provided a comprehensive overview of IT modernization initiatives, which included the Phase 1 public site upgrade, current progress, next steps, and long-term strategies to enhance the member experience. She also addressed OAO's IT modernization journey from stabilization through integration, identifying associated risk areas and corresponding mitigation strategies. The discussion included an analysis of budgetary considerations with an emphasis on achieving cost-neutral implementation. Key deliverables and the significance of the project were also reviewed.

MOTION #28: It was moved by Dr. Virgina Donati and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to proceed with the IT modernization plan and issue the RFP as presented.

CARRIED

Kanan Shah joined the meeting.

14.0 Finance and Audit Committee (F&AC)

14.1 Finance and Audit Committee Report

Dr. Pasquale Vecchio, F&AC Chair, presented the F&AC Report.

MOTION #29: It was moved by Dr. Virginia Donati and seconded by Dr. Bridget Valsamis to approve the Finance and Audit Committee Report.

CARRIED

14.2 2025-2026 Revised Draft Budget Proposal review

The CEO presented the 2025–2026 draft budget proposal, providing a detailed review of recent changes and the current status of the budget. The board considered the F&AC Terms of Reference and gave approval to the financial strategy put forward. Members examined a range of cost-saving options designed to address the planned deficit, with the overarching goal of achieving a balanced budget by the 2026–2027 fiscal year.

Staff presented targeted recommendations for deficit reduction and invited feedback. The board reviewed operating costs and strategic projects, acknowledging that an increase of ongoing commitments could pose challenges to balancing the budget.

Discussion included deficit reduction strategies for the current fiscal year. The board considered organizing a cost-neutral Symposium and closely reviewed details related to the deficit, the operating budget, and the marketing campaign.

Additional proposals included pausing increases to director honorariums as outlined in Schedule B and deferring work on the fee guide. The President expressed concerns regarding potential increases to director honorariums during a period of deficit. The President also expressed support for the fee guide but recommended postponing its development due to fiduciary responsibilities. It was further suggested that the fee guide discussion resume at the August 2026 board meeting.

Finally, the board discussed various strategies to increase OAO membership and explored the potential cost savings associated with holding student interview days virtually instead of in person.

4-ACTION: Staff to provide a student outreach update at the next board meeting.

MOTION #30: It was moved by Dr. Tyler Brown and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

The board discussed the possibility of reducing the advertising levy.

MOTION #32: It was moved by Dr. Shaina Nensi and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to pause on an increase to Schedule B.

CARRIED

MOTION #33: It was moved by Dr. Bridget Valsamis and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to pause work on the fee guide for this budget cycle and bring it back for discussion at the August 2026 board meeting.

CARRIED

MOTION #34: It was moved by Dr. Virginia Donati and seconded by Dr. Bridget Valsamis to accept the proposed 2025-2026 budget as amended including a pause on Schedule B (director honorariums), and a pause on the fee guide development, with related discussion deferred until the August 2026 board meeting.

CARRIED

Kanan Shah left the meeting.

15.0 Governance Committee (GC)

15.1 Governance Committee update

Dr. Bridget Valsamis, GC Chair, presented the GC Report.

15.2 OAO Member Code of Conduct

Dr. Valsamis reported that the Governance Committee developed a draft Member Code of Conduct for director review in the Boardbook. The board recommended releasing the Code promptly and integrating it with member renewals and event registrations. It was confirmed that the document will be available on the OAO member site.

MOTION #35: It was moved by Dr. Krupa Chothani and seconded by Dr. Virginia Donati to adopt the OAO Member Code of Conduct as presented.

CARRIED

The GC Chair discussed aligning committees with strategy and operations for clearer roles and more centralized planning and operational decision making. It was noted that current practices are inconsistent with existing policies. The board considered pursuing this work and suggested meeting with consultant Lyn McDonell to define the project's scope and next steps. Interest was expressed in understanding the financial implications and potential scope of this project. The CEO identified inefficiencies in the current model and noted opportunities to streamline operations for greater effectiveness.

MOTION #36: It was moved by Dr. Tyler Brown and seconded by Dr. Krupa Chothani that a virtual meeting be scheduled with the board and Lyn McDonell to evaluate the necessity and feasibility of this proposed change.

CARRIED

5-ACTION: Staff to send a Doodle poll to set the meeting date and time.

The board engaged in a thorough discussion regarding the alignment of committee structures with the organization's strategic direction. Members emphasized the importance of clearly defining committee responsibilities and ensuring that operational practices are consistent with the board's established policies. There was consensus that further exploration is needed to determine the most effective path forward, including an examination of potential impacts on resources and workflow efficiency.

MOTION #37: It was moved by Dr. Virginia Donati and seconded by Dr. Todd Wilbee to approve the Governance Committee Report.

CARRIED

The Chair conducted a brief Plus/Delta survey with the board.

- Pluses: Time management, supportive and strategic discussion, effective handling of difficult conversations.
- Deltas: More consistent use of "can we live with this" for committee work, focus on governance, improved venue, timely submission of Boardbook materials, and addressing Boardbook comments.

Mark Donnison, Celecia Partap, Danielle Bimmer, Dagmar Hindrichs and Bill Vardy left the meeting.

MOTION #38: It was moved by Dr. Pasquale Vecchio and seconded by Dr. Katie Ryan to move the meeting in camera.

CARRIED

17.0 Adjournment

MOTION #40: It was moved by Dr. Kulvir Singh and seconded by Dr. Krupa Chothani that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned by the President at 4:47 pm at the conclusion of business.