

BC Government Announces Sight Testing Regulation

This past week British Columbia health Minister Kevin Falcon announced new regulations that increase the scope of practice of licensed opticians and at the same time broaden the choice available to consumers wishing to buy eyeglasses and contact lenses.

The OAC was pleased to see that the new regulations provide for certified sight testing opticians to conduct independent automated refraction. This new regulation assures clients of the safety and efficiency of automated refraction as practiced by an optician certified to perform refraction. Sight testing opticians will continue to practice under the authority of the College of Opticians of British Columbia. Sight testing opticians now have the authority to use the results of a sight test to provide both eyeglasses and contact lenses without additional oversight.

Contact lens fitting remains a restricted activity. Only a contact lens fitter can perform the necessary assessments and measurements to complete a contact lens fitting.

Opticians continue to be regulated under the reserved titles of “optician”, “dispensing optician”, and “contact lens fitter”. Others cannot use these designations. These titles assure the public that licensed opticians as regulated vision care professionals, work to exact standards and precision, and are trained in the latest technologies. Licensed opticians provide the highest standard of care and most importantly accountability.

The OAC has recognized for some time the trend toward greater consumer choice in the government’s approach to public policy, and anticipated the need to educate consumers about the importance of making the choice to ask for a licensed optician when seeking vision appliances. Starting on May 15, 2010 you will see the new “Licensed Optician” media campaign launched on national television. The OAC in partnership with other Canadian opticians associations has developed this program to ensure our value as regulated professionals receives a high profile. You will also receive a personal mailing in the month of April. Visit the Licensed Optician website at www.licensedoptician.ca to learn more about the campaign. This is phase 1 of a multi-year campaign.

There are several new features in the regulations that OAC will be examining in the coming weeks, and we plan to raise all issues of concern with government well before the stated May 1st implementation date.

We encourage you to review our Frequently Asked Questions document which will be updated as we continue to respond to questions from Opticians across Canada.

More information regarding the announcement and regulations can be found on the Ministry of Health website at www.gov.bc.ca/health.