

# BRIEFING NOTE

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Fazal Khan, Registrar

**DATE:** December 2-3, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Fall NACOR Report

For Decision

For Information

Monitoring Report

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## **Purpose:**

This report will provide highlights from the Fall National meetings held October 7th, 2024, in Ottawa, ON. In attendance were Chair, Derick Summers, Vice Chair Kevin Cloutier, Registrar, Fazal Khan and Deputy Registrar, Amy Stein.

## **Background:**

The National Alliance of Canadian Opticianry Regulators (NACOR) facilitates bi-annual gatherings of all provincial opticianry regulators. Each province sends at least one voting member and often other support staff and board observers. Each province provides provincial updates including statistics regarding membership. The national meetings provide an opportunity to network and collaborate on issues of national interest. This collaboration has resulted in creating consistency in several key areas such as registration tools and registration practices which helps reduce jurisdictional differences between provinces.

## **Highlights:**

### Updates to Ontario Registration Regulation and Mutual Recognition Agreement Policy:

Ontario provided an update on general changes to the Registration Regulation as well as specific policy changes that may impact other provincial partners.

### Industry Round Table:

Next steps for the Industry Round Table meeting in the Spring of 2025 included sharing a concrete action plan for collaboration to address possible recruitment activities to mitigate concerns around perceived optician shortages. A teaser video targeted to international applicants showcasing the PLAR process was commissioned by Ontario and shared by MDR Strategy Group with provincial partners. Another video focused on domestic PLAR candidates is under development. These videos will be showcased at the next Industry Round Table to help encourage a collaborative approach between all partners in the effort to increase interest and awareness of the profession.

### NACOR Restructuring:

With changes to regulatory models being discussed and in some provinces such as BC, undergoing amalgamation, NACOR has been revisiting its governance structure as it approaches the future. At the previous Spring session, there was an agreement in principle to move forward with a revised structure and to return with a draft re-structure of bylaws.

At a high level, NACOR proposed the following:

- Each provincial regulator is a member of NACOR
  - Any regulator who pays a NACOR seat fee is granted access to NACOR services (national examinations, PLAR, collaborative working groups, etc.)
- Each provincial regulator is entitled to one vote in the election of the NACOR Board of Directors
  - Three (3) elected positions exist on the Board
- Working groups:
  - Administrators Collaborative, National Examination Collaborative, PLAR Collaborative, and Ad Hoc Collaborative
  - Bring resources together from all NACOR members to work on collaborative projects and make recommendations to NACOR regarding projects, services, and products

Consensus was reached on the high-level principles on structure and final bylaws will be shared at the next NACOR meeting.

### 2025 Contributions:

A contribution of \$5.00 per registrant by each provincial regulatory board to be added to your NACOR Seat Fee, rather than being billed out separately and paid directly to the OCC. This fee will be used towards national awareness activities including maintaining the “Become and An Optician Website”.

### Budget and Fees:

As NACOR transitions to its new mandate and governance structure, it has moved to providing complete exams and PLAR administration for most of its provincial members which is impacting workload and associated costs. Upon reviewing the budget, it was discussed that NACOR cannot operate on a revenue neutral budget and still be prepared for unexpected costs such as those associated with exam appeals. To that end the board unanimously agreed that fees for PLAR and examinations must reflect a more realistic recovery of costs. As such, the following fee increases will be coming into effect in 2025:

**The proposed updated fees are:**

- keeping the document review at \$250.00
- increasing the Eyeglass fee to \$1,000.00 (currently \$350)
- increasing the Contact Lens fee and Refracting fee to \$500.00 each (currently \$350)
- It was proposed and agreed to increase the fee per exam by \$100 to \$875.00 effective March 1, 2025, then to look at implementing an increment increase each year thereafter

Accommodations & Appeals

An appeal that was received after the spring of 2024 exams from a candidate that was granted accommodation but then after failing, appealed the fact that they couldn't receive all of the accommodations they had requested and made a complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal. In the end the complaint was withdrawn, however this made the NACOR office recognize that NACOR needs more clear accommodation policies and procedures:

- NACOR accommodation policies and procedures should align with best practices for similar OSCE examinations
- NACOR should ensure the denial of any accommodation requests are given to the candidate in writing with a clear explanation for any accommodation request not met
- A Human Rights complaint against NACOR may be inevitable based on current trends and NACOR should be prepared with updated policies and procedures as well as a contingency fund to see us through those proceedings
- NACOR should update internal policies and procedures to ensure appeals are managed consistently and to address the cessation of the appeal process upon notification of a Human Rights complaint.

**Public Interest Considerations:**

Participation in NACOR has resulted in a nationally administered examination and entry to practice competencies, resulting in uniform education and testing of opticians across Canada and ultimately, a consistent experience for patients regardless of which province they seek care in.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations:**

Participation in NACOR has created accessibility tools such as the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) tool as well as the Pre-Arrival Readiness Tool (PART) which assist those with prior learning or existing training/qualifications to gain access to alternate provincial registration pathways.

**Risk Management:**

Third party administration of the examination creates a level of independence and integrity to the process as well as creating consistency at a national level. Using NACOR to develop the national competencies which serves as the basis of the national examination and then have that examination undergo regular psychometric review, provides rigor and defensibility to the entry to practice examination. Participation in NACOR ensures that the College remains abreast of advances and issues related to the administration of the national examination and other regulatory tools provided by NACOR to the province.

**Recommendations/Action Required:**

This report is for informational purposes and requires no action.