

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board

FROM: Executive Committee

DATE: August 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Registration Fee Adjustment

For Decision For Information Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To review stakeholder feedback and approve a by-law amendment relating to registration fees for 2022-2023.

Background:

At the May 2021 meeting, the Board reviewed a proposal for the 2022 registration fees, and approved a corresponding by-law amendment (**Appendix A**) for circulation for stakeholder feedback. The proposed amendment would set registration fees for 2022 at the level that was originally slated for 2021 prior to a fee reduction that was implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Upon reviewing early feedback that was received regarding the initial proposal (Option A) the administration brought a second option, (Option B) to the Executive Committee for consideration. Option B proposes a “phased” approach where the return to full fee levels will be implemented over a two year period, with the first half of the fee correction being applied in 2022 and the second half in 2023. The Executive Committee approved Option B for circulation for stakeholder feedback on June 16, 2021. A by-law amendment that corresponds to Option B is attached as **Appendix B**.

For Consideration:

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder feedback was sought via survey for both Option A (non phased approach with full fees as of 2022) and Option B (phased approach with full fees returning in 2023). The stakeholder feedback survey for Option A closed on July 28, 2021 and received 407 responses. The Stakeholder feedback Survey for Option B closed on August 16, 2021 and received 149 responses.

The following chart provides a summary of the stakeholder feedback received, including a summary of the main themes that were identified in the comments:

| | Option A (Non-Phased Approach) | Option B (Phased Approach) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| % In Favour | 27% | 76.3% |
| % Neutral/ Unsure | 16% | 10.14% |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| % Opposed | 56% | 12.16% |
| Comments/ Concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fees are too high - generally and as compared to other health professions - Fees should be reduced - The College should reduce operational expenses (e.g. office space) - The pandemic continues to have a financial impact on individuals and businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The phased approach is more reasonable/the best of the two options presented - The phased approach will give opticians a break during a continued difficult period - Fees are still too high and should be reduced - The College should reduce operational expenses (e.g. office space) - Fees for interns and/or students should be increased |

In addition, approximately 80% of respondents indicated that their ability to practice was negatively impacted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. they were unable to work for some or all of the year so far, or they saw a reduction in hours or a negative financial impact to their business).

Financial Considerations

The Executive Committee reviewed a detailed analysis of the impact of both Option A and Option B on the College's overall finances. When the fee relief plan was initially approved by the Board in July of 2020, it was anticipated that the fee reduction would be for one year only, and that the College was expected to replenish the General Reserve fund by 2023. In the event that Option B (phased approach over two years) is approved, the replenishment of reserves will be pushed back by one additional year, to 2024.

Public Interest Considerations:

The College regulates the profession to ensure the public interest is served. In order to fulfill its mandate and preserve public confidence, the organization must have adequate operating funds.

From a public interest perspective, it is important that patients have continued access to an adequate number of Registered Opticians in 2022 and beyond, and that the College registration fees do not put an undue burden on opticians, and by extension, their patients. The survey results indicated that the majority of opticians continue to experience financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations:

Feedback surveys are one way that the College assesses the different ways that a proposed decision will impact registrants, based on their individual needs and circumstances. Feedback has been received that indicates while many opticians are currently working, many have not returned to full time employment.

Recommendation:

The Executive Committee recommends that the Board approve the by-law amendment set out in **Appendix B**, which represents Option B, or the phased approach that will restore fees to pre-pandemic levels over a two year period.

APPENDIX A

Proposed By-law Amendment for 'Option A' – Non-phased approach

5.2 Registration Fees

(a) Annual Registration Fees

| Class | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Registered Optician | \$887 | \$899 | \$921 | \$944 | \$968 | \$742 | \$992 |
| Registered Intern Optician | \$129 | \$132 | \$136 | \$139 | \$142 | \$146 | \$146 |
| Registered Student Optician | \$129 | \$132 | \$136 | \$139 | \$142 | \$146 | \$146 |

Appendix B

Proposed By-law Amendment for 'Option B' – Phased approach

5.2 Registration Fees

(a) Annual Registration Fees

| Class | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Registered Optician | \$887 | \$899 | \$921 | \$944 | \$968 | \$742 | \$867 | \$992 |
| Registered Intern Optician | \$129 | \$132 | \$136 | \$139 | \$142 | \$146 | \$146 | \$146 |
| Registered Student Optician | \$129 | \$132 | \$136 | \$139 | \$142 | \$146 | \$146 | \$146 |