

National Government Relations Strategy

Stratégie nationale de relations avec les gouvernements

BY / PAR KIRSTEN NORTH, OD, PRESIDENT CAO

In 2009, the CAO Council established a new five year strategic plan that included Government Relations (GR) as a key strategic direction. The plan included several actions including:

- Consider hiring a staff person responsible for government relations and public policy.
- Respond to the call for a National Vision Strategy by the National Coalition for Vision Health. Participate and influence.
- Achieve federal regulation of cosmetic contact lenses.
- Establish a Key Person Political Program.
- Show concrete examples of influencing public policy so that it has a positive impact on optometry and optometric patients.

The legislation in British Columbia was a stimulus to move quickly in providing national support to CAO members in B.C. We provided resources including funds, staff and external expertise. Some of these efforts are ongoing to this day.

An important action was the hiring of Mr. Dana Cooper, Director, Government Relations and Public Policy. Mr. Cooper is a seasoned association executive who has already shown results at a national level and providing support to CAO members and the provincial associations/regulatory bodies. He prepared a Government Relations Strategy that will provide a roadmap for CAO. The strategy will be presented at the Optometric Leaders' Forum in late January, 2011.

For the past several years, CAO has used an outside GR firm in providing advice and assisting in this area. We expect that CAO will continue to need outside resources, this will be done on a project-by-project basis.

There is no doubt about the importance of influencing government including both elected and staff officials. There is an ongoing need by CAO, provincial associations, and most importantly by individual members. It really doesn't matter if your interests are at a civic, provincial or national level.

Get involved.

In 2009, le Conseil de l'ACO a établi un nouveau plan stratégique sur cinq ans axé principalement sur les relations avec les gouvernements (RG). Ce plan comprend plusieurs mesures :

- Songer à embaucher un membre du personnel pour lui confier le dossier des relations avec les gouvernements et de la politique publique.
- Répondre à l'appel d'une stratégie nationale de la vision lancé par la Coalition nationale en santé oculaire. Participer et influencer.
- Faire adopter un règlement fédéral sur les lentilles de contact à but esthétique.
- Mettre sur pied un programme politique de personnes clés.
- Donner des exemples concrets d'influence de la politique publique en vue de son effet positif sur l'optométrie et les patients optométriques.

La loi adoptée en Colombie-Britannique nous a incités à accorder rapidement un soutien national aux membres de l'ACO en C.-B. Nous avons mis à leur disposition des ressources financières et humaines de même qu'un expert externe. Une partie de ces efforts se poursuivent à ce jour.

L'embauche de M. Dana Cooper à titre de directeur, Relations avec les gouvernements et

politique publique, a été une mesure importante. M. Cooper est un dirigeant d'association chevronné qui a obtenu des résultats à l'échelle nationale par son soutien aux membres de l'ACO et aux associations provinciales et organismes de réglementation. Il a rédigé une stratégie de relations avec les gouvernements qui servira de carte routière pour l'ACO. Cette stratégie sera présentée au Forum des dirigeants optométriques à la fin de janvier 2011.

Depuis quelques années, l'ACO bénéficie des conseils et de l'aide d'un cabinet de RG qu'elle a

embauché à cette fin. Nous nous attendons à ce que l'ACO continue d'avoir besoin de ressources externes en fonction des projets qui seront entrepris.

L'importance des relations avec les gouvernements, notamment avec les élus et leur personnel, ne fait pas de doute. C'est un besoin que l'ACO, les associations provinciales et, plus important encore, les membres individuels éprouvent continuellement, que ce soit au niveau municipal, provincial ou national.

Participez.

Canadian School Representatives meet at UAB



Clinic Directors as well as Externship Directors, from 22 North American schools and colleges of optometry meet on an annual basis to share ideas and administrative tools. This year, the meeting was hosted by the School of Optometry of the University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB). Dr. Tim McMahon, Associate Director of Clinical Affairs from University of Waterloo (UW),

Dr. Lisa Christian, Externship Director from UW and Dr. Etty Bitton, Director of Externships from the École d'optométrie, Université de Montréal attended the conference.

Each year, the host school addresses a timely topic for discussion. The Externship Directors discussed evaluation systems, assignment systems (how students are assigned to their externship

rotation) as well as the increasing administrative load of these programs. Representatives from affiliated programs, such as the Navy, Army, Veterans Administration and Indian Health Services (IHS) were also onsite to discuss their programs and how students can benefit from those particular environments.

The Clinic Directors tackled clinical management issues including how to manage no-shows, implementation of an electronic medical record (EMR) system, and how to effectively market optometric services in the community. An overview of recent US congress laws affecting health care providers provided insight for the group as to how some of these changes may affect optometry clinics within North America.

Everyone also had a chance to attend an exhibit hall with numerous sponsors to see new products, learn about new academic programs for the students and renew relationships with colleagues and industry representatives.