

## **SPECSAVERS CHAMPIONS NEXT GENERATION OF OPTOMETRISTS IN CANADA**

*with Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry sponsorship*

**Vancouver, British Columbia (June 17, 2024)** – Specsavers, a leading Canadian eyecare and eyewear provider, has announced their sponsorship of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO). ASCO represents the interests of institutions of optometric education and enhances the efforts of these institutions as they prepare highly qualified graduates of optometry to best serve the public's eye health needs.

Latest reports from the Government of Canada projects a labour shortage of optometrists over the period of 2022-31 and anticipates job prospects for the profession to remain very strong. With only two optometry schools in Canada, the University of Waterloo offers the only program available for English-speaking students who wish to pursue the profession, accepting 90 students each year. The intake capacity has remained the same since the early 2000s. Meanwhile, Statistics Canada reported that the population of English-speaking Canada has grown by 37% and the aging population by 48% within that time.

"The availability of doctors has fallen behind population growth and the needs of the demographic in the country," said Bill Moir, General Manager at Specsavers Canada. "To deliver on the increasing eyecare needs of patients and customers, we're collaborating closely with ASCO, whose membership includes American colleges of optometry, University of Waterloo, and Université de Montréal, to close the labour gap."

Dedicated to advancing the profession in Canada, Specsavers is the only Canadian corporate contributor of ASCO. The company is actively working with schools to address the shortage of optometrists by furthering initiatives aimed at increasing interest in the profession, capacity for education and ultimately, access to quality care for Canadians.

"As the world's largest, optometrist-owned and -led organization, we believe in investing in the future of optometry and supporting the next generation of professionals," said Dr. Laurie Lesser, Head of Optometry Attraction at Specsavers Canada. "We're proud to contribute to the development of Canadian optometry students studying across Canada and the USA, helping them access the resources and opportunities they need to pursue the profession and excel in their studies."

"Collaborating with generous organizations such as Specsavers through our Corporate Contributors Program nurtures robust, forward-thinking, and evidence-based optometric education that benefits the eye and vision health of patients around the globe today and well into the future," said Dawn Mancuso, Executive Vice President/CEO of ASCO. "Specsavers is demonstrating its commitment to optometry in Canada, and we're thrilled to have them as a strong Canadian supporter to help us further our educational mission."

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### **About Specsavers**

Specsavers is an optometrist-owned and -led business that entered the Canadian market in late 2021. Since then, we have opened over 115 locations across the country, in B.C., Alberta and Ontario, with stores set to open in Manitoba in the summer of 2024. As part of Specsavers commitment to accessible eyecare, Specsavers equips every location with Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) technology. OCT technology helps optometrists to detect sight-threatening conditions in their earliest stages. Specsavers was recognized in Canada's Best Workplaces™ List for 2024 by Great Place To Work®, the global authority on workplace culture.

Founded in the UK 40 years ago by optometrist husband-and-wife team, Doug and Mary Perkins, there are now more than 2,600 Specsavers healthcare businesses across 11 countries serving over 42 million patients and customers. Specsavers is driven by its purpose of "changing lives through better sight" and aims to transform the way Canadians experience eyecare by offering exceptional service, advanced clinical equipment and affordable and quality eyewear.

### **Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)**

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) is the academic leadership organization committed to advancing optometric education and research to enhance the health and well-being of the public. Since 1941, ASCO has pursued this mission by representing the interests of institutions of optometric education and by enhancing the efforts of these institutions as they prepare highly qualified graduates for entrance into the profession of optometry in order to best serve the public's eye and vision needs. ASCO's activities cover a wide range of programs including applicant development and diversity, faculty and leadership development, advocacy, residency promotion, collaboration and data development, and communications.

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