



Press Release: Unregulated Internet-based Dispensing of Eyewear Prompts the College of Opticians of Ontario and the College of Optometrists of Ontario to Seek an Injunction against Essilor Group of Canada Inc./Clearly

TORONTO, ONTARIO (Marketwired – December 14, 2016) – In a move to protect Ontario patients, the College of Opticians of Ontario and the College of Optometrists of Ontario have turned to the courts, seeking an injunction that would prohibit Clearly, owned by Essilor Group of Canada Inc. from dispensing prescription eyeglasses and contact lenses online to the Ontario public, without following Ontario legislation.

The College of Opticians of Ontario, and the College of Optometrists of Ontario regulate the practice of opticianry and optometry in Ontario. In Ontario, dispensing prescription eyewear is a controlled act. Dispensing includes the preparation, adaptation and delivery of prescription eyewear. It is illegal for anyone other than an optician, optometrist or physician to dispense prescription eyewear to an Ontario patient except under appropriate supervision or delegation.

As regulatory bodies the Colleges have a responsibility to serve and to protect the public interest. This responsibility includes ensuring that Ontarians are only dispensed their corrective eyewear by an authorized, regulated health professional, which is based on a valid prescription. The Colleges have the power under s. 87 of the Health Professions Procedural Code to apply to a judge of the Ontario Superior Court to bring an injunction to stop any individual, or organization from dispensing in a manner that violates Ontario law.

Advances in technology are enabling healthcare providers to offer services that are more accessible and convenient. It is now possible to use the internet to lawfully dispense eyewear to patients in Ontario. Health professionals can follow the updated standards of practice and protocols developed by the Colleges on use of the internet to enable an authorized practitioner to validate and dispense the patient's prescription eyewear safely.

“Patient choice and convenience is important, but this can't come at the expense of patient safety” says Dr. Paula Garshowitz, Registrar of the College of Optometrists of Ontario. “This action isn't about stopping online dispensing. This is about ensuring that Ontarians have full protection under Ontario laws.”

Improperly fitted glasses can lead to eyestrain, double vision and headaches. Improperly fitted contact lenses pose an even greater risk and can cause sight-threatening injury such as corneal ulcers and infection.

“At the end of the day, our respective Colleges have a duty to serve and protect the public interest,” says Fazal Khan, Registrar of the College of Opticians of Ontario. “That means ensuring the highest standard of vision care for Ontario patients, regardless of where or how they purchase their eyewear.”

As the matter is before the courts, the Colleges will make no further statements at this time.

About the College of Opticians of Ontario

The COO is one of 26 self-governing health Colleges established by law. It is not a teaching institution. The COO is dedicated to supporting opticians in their delivery of high quality, safe and ethical care to the public of Ontario. One of the ways of ensuring these high standards of care is by establishing standards and guidelines for opticians.

<http://coptont.org/docs/Legislation/Standards-of-Practice-05-30-2016.pdf>

<http://coptont.org/docs/Legislation/Practice-Guidelines-09-28-15.pdf>

About the College of Optometrists of Ontario

Optometry has been a regulated profession in Ontario since 1919. The College of Optometrists of Ontario is the self-regulatory authority responsible for registering (licensing) and governing optometrists in Ontario. The College's authority and limitations of its powers can be found in legislation including the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Optometry Act*.

College of Optometrists of Ontario- Spectacle Therapy Using the Internet:

<http://www.collegeoptom.on.ca/members/professional-practice/policy/366-spectacle-therapy-using-the-internet-2015/>

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