



2024 Annual Report



### Who We Are

The Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) is the registering and regulating body for the profession of pharmacy in Ontario. OCP's mandate, set out in provincial legislation, is to serve the public interest and to hold Ontario's registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians accountable to the established legislation, standards of practice, Code of Ethics and policies and guidelines relevant to pharmacy practice.

OCP also regulates and accredits community and hospital pharmacies, holding them accountable to operational standards and relevant policies and legislation; pharmacies must be accredited by OCP to operate in Ontario.

### What We Do

OCP regulates the profession of pharmacy in the public interest by:



Establishing and maintaining the requirements for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to practice in Ontario and registering those who meet these requirements



Establishing, maintaining and enforcing standards of practice, policies and rules that promote the delivery of quality, safe and ethical pharmacy care to patients and communities



Accrediting pharmacies to operate in Ontario and holding them accountable to established operational standards and expectations that promote quality pharmacy services and enable regulated pharmacy professionals to meet professional practice and ethical standards



Promoting continued professional competency, compliance and ongoing quality improvement of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies through a robust Quality Assurance Program



Managing complaints and concerns about pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies and taking appropriate steps in the public interest when conduct or the delivery of care falls below expectations of the profession

The legal powers and duties of the College are set out in the <u>Regulated Health Professions</u>
<u>Act</u>, the Health Professions Procedural Code, the <u>Pharmacy Act</u> and the <u>Drug and</u>
<u>Pharmacies Regulation Act</u>.





# Message from the Chair, Board of Directors

Looking back on 2024, it's clear that the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) made a significant impact on protecting the public interest and ensuring Ontarians receive the best care from their pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies. The Board of Directors played a key role in setting policies and making important decisions that benefited Ontarians.

With the guidance of our new strategic plan and our commitment to our responsibilities as Canada's largest pharmacy regulator, OCP addressed several important issues. These issues required the Board to take decisive action to ensure high-quality care for Ontario patients.

One of the key issues we focused on was the concern shared by the public and registrants about the impact of business pressures on patient-care decisions. In response, the Board approved two zero-tolerance statements. These statements emphasized OCP's concern about business decisions that could interfere with a pharmacy professional's ability to act in the best interest of their patients. These actions, aligned with our strategic goals, led to important regulatory changes and ongoing discussions on how we can continue to prioritize the delivery of care that meets high-quality practice and ethical standards at all times.

To promote safe and ethical pharmacy care, the Board also approved several policies, such as the Human Rights Policy and the Supervision of Pharmacy Personnel Policy. These policies set clear expectations for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in their care for patients. Additionally, to ensure the safety of compounded medications, the Board approved mandatory training for select supervisors overseeing compounding activities.

As we focused on improving the quality of care in Ontario, the Board also participated in discussions about expanding the scope of practice for pharmacy professionals. OCP has worked closely with the Ministry of Health on this initiative, and as these discussions continue into 2025, the Board will stay focused on ensuring any changes approved by the government are implemented safely and effectively.

To strengthen our ability to regulate the profession in the public interest, we began the process of implementing a third-party governance review in 2025 to improve the Board's role in managing and guiding OCP's activities through the adoption of governance best practices. We also welcomed new pharmacy professional Board members, as well as academic and public members appointed by government who will bring additional perspectives to the important decisions we will make as a Board.

It is an honour to oversee Ontario's 24,000+ regulated pharmacy professionals and 5,000+ pharmacies. This work wouldn't be possible without the dedication and expertise of our committee members, OCP staff and Board Directors, all of whom are committed to protecting the public's health and safety.

Sincerely,

### **Douglas Brown**

Chair, Board of Directors



# Message from the Acting Registrar

Each year, the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) focuses on new regulatory priorities while fulfilling our core responsibilities. Looking back at 2024, we faced new challenges but also achieved many successes in our mission to serve the public.

One of the highlights of 2024 was the continued rollout of time-delayed safes in all community pharmacies across Ontario. This initiative, launched in 2023 to deter pharmacy robberies and enhance safety for staff, patients and communities, was supported by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and local police forces. It also included a public awareness campaign that reached millions of people through online news coverage. The result has been a significant reduction in pharmacy robberies.

We also made improvements to our registration and quality assurance processes. With new regulations in place, pharmacy technicians are now fully integrated into our Quality Assurance Program and the two-part register. We streamlined the registration process, created a new class for intern technicians and transitioned to an entry-to-practice assessment model for pharmacy technician applicants, consistent with the model for pharmacists.

In addition to these developments, we worked towards our four strategic goals and set the stage for further progress in 2025. We introduced a zero-tolerance conduct framework to address business pressures affecting patient care and pharmacy professionals. We also began collecting more practice environment data and making plans for new policies and actions in the coming year.

To ensure we provide clear and relevant information to registrants, members of the public and other partners, we reviewed our communication tools and identified areas for improvement. We started a policy review initiative to make our expectations clearer and to reduce duplication. We also continued to focus on risk-based regulation and invested in equity, diversity and inclusion training and policy development to ensure that pharmacy care is free from discrimination.

Year after year I'm moved by the dedication of the many groups and individuals who make our work possible. I offer a heartfelt thank you to the College's staff, committee members and Board Directors who work tirelessly to serve and protect the public interest, the patients who put their trust in us as a healthcare regulator, and our system partners for their input, engagement and collaboration. It takes an enormous amount of effort, focus, commitment and expertise from all of these individuals to ensure we are fulfilling our legislated objects and responsibilities on a daily basis.

And of course, thank you to all pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, interns, pharmacy technician interns and students who ensure patients continue to have access to and receive safe, ethical and quality pharmacy care that they can trust.

Sincerely,

**Susan James**Acting Registrar



# Strategic Plan: 2024 Progress

The College's 2024-2028 Strategic **Plan** guides our operational and policy decisions. In addition to setting out our **values**, which express who we are, and our **regulatory principles**, which guide our work, the Strategic Plan identifies four **strategic goals** that we intend to achieve and prioritize. Learn more about our **Strategic Plan**.

### GOAL 1:

Regardless of pharmacy setting, management and business exigencies do not compromise the health and well-being of pharmacy professionals or impede their ability to adhere to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

Goal 1 was a significant focus for the College in 2024, with the establishment of our zero-tolerance approach for any business practices that impede pharmacy professionals' ability to provide effective and safe care to their patients.

Many of the activities initiated in the previous year have set the foundation for further action in 2025 and beyond:

- Hearing from registrants about their experiences with business pressures through a survey and a series of town halls
- Publishing our report <u>Under Stress and Duress</u> to share what we heard from thousands of registrants
- Setting an extensive list of strategies we continue to pursue under four key strategies: regulatory programs, data collection and public reporting, legislation and regulation changes, and engagement and outreach

- Establishing feedback mechanisms to collect reports of business pressures
- Using a zero-tolerance conduct framework to screen information provided to us for possible relevance to business pressures, ultimately resulting in dozens of investigations opened
- Creating a formal position statement highlighting our concerns with preferred provider networks (PPNs)
- Holding pharmacy directors accountable for their pharmacy operations by developing a new mandatory declaration for 2025 and continuing work to adjust our pharmacy operational assessments to measure whether standards of practice are being met
- Sharing our insights and learning from the experiences of others in different jurisdictions so that we can work collectively to address these pressures

We are committed to keeping an open dialogue with registrants and providing transparent reports on our progress. Learn more on the **Quality** First: Addressing Business Pressures on Pharmacy Practice web page.

### GOAL 2:

The College effectively provides members of the public, registrants and other partners with clear, relevant, up-to-date information.

#### Activities included:

- Conducting a registrant communications audit to identify opportunities for improving the way we communicate (what and how) and to ensure we are using the vehicles and formats registrants prefer
- Adopting knowledge translation and clear language principles in our resources for registrants
- Initiating a website renewal project, set to launch later in 2025, to make it easier for users to find what they are looking for
- Starting a policy refresh project to streamline the policy tools used at the College, making it easier for registrants to know and understand College expectations and reduce duplication and confusion

### GOAL 3:

The College has the expertise and resources to address immediate demands caused by changes in the regulatory or practice environment.

#### Activities included:

- Engaging in activities to better define staff roles and responsibilities to support more effective and efficient decision-making
- Continuing to identify, develop and implement strategies to further advance risk-based regulation and ensure the alignment of activities to the College's mandate

### GOAL 4:

The College uses its regulatory influence to ensure that all patients are treated with respect and without discrimination via positive changes in pharmacy practice.

#### Activities included:

- Establishing the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Registrant Reference Group to receive regular assessment of the impact of policy and practice requirements on equity-deserving patients. Made up of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, the EDI Registrant Reference Group provides the College with their perspectives on regulatory and practice-based matters related to human rights, equity and fairness in pharmacy practice
- Creating a <u>Human Rights Policy</u> to clarify and consolidate the College's expectations of registrants when it comes to practicing pharmacy, in compliance with existing federal and provincial human rights legislation that requires health services to be provided free from discrimination



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# STREAMLINING REGISTRATION AND EVOLVING THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

College-proposed regulatory amendments under the *Pharmacy Act* that impact the College's registration and quality assurance processes were approved by the Ministry of Health in June 2024 and came into effect October 1, 2024. Changes included eliminating the pharmacy student class of registration, integrating pharmacy technicians into the two-part register and creating an intern technician class of registration. The College supported implementation of these changes through an online information hub that included information session recordings, audience-specific FAQs, *Pharmacy Connection* articles and other tools and resources.

### **DETERRING PHARMACY ROBBERIES**

In 2024, all 5,000+ community pharmacies in Ontario reported the use of time-delayed safes for securing narcotics. This marked a significant milestone in the implementation of the time-delayed safe mandate approved by the Board in 2023 to help curb the risk of pharmacy robberies throughout Ontario. Time-delayed safes have had a significant impact on reducing pharmacy robberies, with Toronto seeing an 82% drop year-over-year (Q1 2023 vs Q1 2024). A media-focused public-awareness blitz to promote public knowledge of the use of time-delayed safes in pharmacies garnered 173 media hits in two days with a potential reach of more than 136 million (in online news coverage), contributing to the deterrent effect of this important mandate. The College continues to collaborate with law enforcement, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and community pharmacies throughout the province to promote ongoing crime prevention strategies.

# ADDRESSING BUSINESS PRESSURES IMPACTING QUALITY OF CARE

Through town halls, survey responses and emails, registrants told the College that business pressures are impacting the quality of care they want to provide to their patients, impeding their professional autonomy and affecting their own well-being and mental health. In response, the College's Board established a zero-tolerance approach for any business practices that impede pharmacy professionals' ability to provide effective and safe care to their patients. An extensive list of strategies that align with the zero-tolerance approach were identified, and implementation is underway. Read more about how we are addressing business pressures on page 5, Strategic Plan: 2024 Progress.

### **ENHANCING MEDICATION SAFETY**

In 2024, the College began receiving data on individual pharmacies' engagement with the Assurance and Improvement in Medication Safety (AIMS) Program to better understand barriers to use and help inform the development of resources and supports. Two AIMS-focused Pharmacy Connection articles published in 2024 focused on trends observed in the AIMS data and recommendations for pharmacy professionals on reducing risks. The Safety Insights Group, an arms-length group of system partners with data analytics expertise, reviewed recent data from the AIMS Program and published a report on antibiotic events to support continued quality improvement in community pharmacies. And an evaluation of the AIMS Program is underway to help strengthen and improve mandatory incident reporting in Ontario and further protect patients.

# TRAINING FOR COMPOUNDING SUPERVISORS SUPPORTS SAFE PATIENT CARE

Compounding activities can pose a high risk to patient safety and the College's data from operational assessments showed that compounding standards are not being fully met. The Board therefore approved mandatory training for new compounding supervisors in all pharmacies and current compounding supervisors in pharmacies where standards are not being met. Work is currently underway to support this requirement, which will come into effect in 2025.

# ROLLING OUT PACE FOR PHARMACY TECHNICIAN APPLICANTS

The College transitioned from the Structured Practical Training (SPT) program to the Practice Assessment of Competence at Entry (PACE) model for pharmacy technician applicants. PACE aligns with an updated regulation that stipulates health regulatory colleges cannot require Canadian experience as a registration requirement. PACE focuses on measuring a candidate's readiness to safely and independently practice the authorized acts of the profession.

## ALIGNING BY-LAW UPDATES WITH REGULATORY CHANGES

The Board approved changes to the College By-Law following a 60-day public consultation to seek feedback from registrants, members of the public and system partners. The key updates to the By-Law address changes in regulations, application of gender-neutral language, changes or additions to administrative fees and updates to the public register.

## DEFINING USE OF EMERGENCY ASSIGNMENT REGISTRATION

Informed by a new policy that sets out the expectations on how the College's Board will determine when to open and close the emergency assignment class(es) of registration, the Board passed a motion to close the emergency classes of registration for both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. To support the transition into another College registration class, existing emergency assignment registration holders were granted a transition period.

# CODIFYING SERVICE COMMITMENTS THROUGH SERVICE CHARTER LAUNCH

The <u>Service Charter</u>, which expresses what registrants, applicants, members of the public and system partners can expect when interacting with the College, was officially launched in January 2024. The commitments made in the Service Charter guide how we make decisions and direct our work in alignment with the values and regulatory principles outlined in the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

# STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH A GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Board initiated a process for an independent third-party governance review to further enhance the Board in its duty to manage and administer the College's affairs, including its duty to provide the College with its overall policy and strategic direction.



# WHO ARE ONTARIO'S PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS AND WHERE DO THEY PRACTICE?



**18,648** pharmacists

Average age of pharmacists:

45

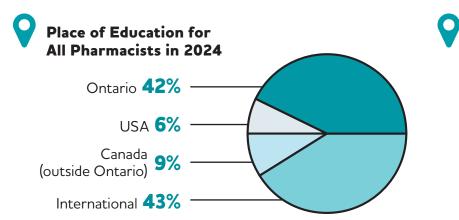
6,206

pharmacy technicians

Average age of pharmacy technicians:

41

Data shown is from 2024





### New Registrants in 2024



New pharmacist registrants\*:

855

New pharmacy technician registrants\*:

519



Pharmacy interns currently training in Ontario:

239

Intern technicians currently training in Ontario:

119



New out-of-province pharmacy professionals registered in Ontario through the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA).

127

\*Includes registrants who re-registered with the College.





Data shown is from 2024

Accredited community pharmacies (total):

5,019

Community pharmacies providing non-sterile compounding:

2,895

Community pharmacies providing sterile compounding:

77



Accredited hospital pharmacies (total):

238

Hospital pharmacies providing non-sterile compounding:

132

Hospital pharmacies providing sterile compounding:

111



**i** Learn more about the College's oversight of pharmacies.



### Community Pharmacy Ownership in 2024

374

small chains
(3 to 19 pharmacies
owned by a single
corporation)

**55** banner

**183** franchise

831

large chains (20+ pharmacies owned by a single corporation)

**39** banner

**0** franchise

3,814

(1-2 pharmacies owned by a single corporation)

**1,932** banner

**503** franchise

Place of Practice	Pharmacist	Pharmacy Technician
Community pharmacy	12,711	2,169
Hospital and other healthcare facilities	3,065	3,452
No workplace recorded	1,584	347
Association/academia/government	301	90
Industry/other	745	143
Pharmacy corporate office/ professional practice/clinic	107	5

Data shown is from 2024

**Banner:** Pharmacies that are affiliated with a central office where they use a recognized name and may participate in centralized buying, marketing, professional programs, etc. **Franchise:** Pharmacy that is owned by franchisee who enters a business relationship with a company (franchisor) for the legal usage of the franchisor's name and products.





### **PHARMACY ASSESSMENTS**

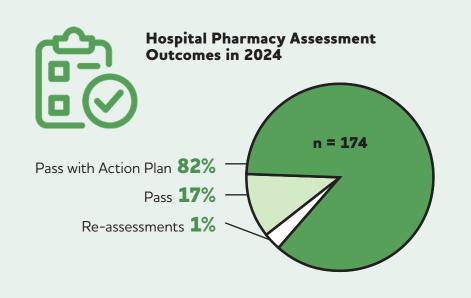
Type of Community Pharmacy Assessment	2024
Routine	565
Change in ownership	290
New openings (first visit)	150
New openings (call back after six months)	331
Relocations	28
Re-assessments ordered by operations advisor	32
Re-assessments ordered by the Accreditation Committee	16
Total	1,412



### **Community Pharmacy Assessment Outcomes in 2024**



Type of Hospital Pharmacy Assessment	2024
Routine	167
New openings	5
Relocations	1
Re-assessments ordered by operations advisor	1
Total	174





**<sup>1</sup>** <u>Learn more</u> about pharmacy operational assessments.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM**

Self-Assessments Completed as Part of the Quality Assurance Program in 2024



**2,161**pharmacy technicians

Knowledge Assessments Completed as Part of the Quality Assurance Program in 2024



**3,357** pharmacist

### Quality Assurance (QA) Committee Activities in 2024



• registrants referred to the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee by the QA Committee



registrants with Terms, Conditions or Limitations placed on their Certificate of Registration regarding quality assurance activities



46 registrants referred to the QA Committee and directed to undertake remediation

### **PRACTICE ASSESSMENTS**

Community Pharmacist Practice Assessments in 2024

Routine assessments:

1,258

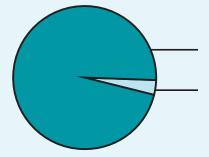


90% passed with self-directed learning
10% required additional coaching and re-assessment

Community Pharmacy Technician Practice Assessments in 2024

Routine assessments:

241



**98%** passed with self-directed learning

2% required additional coaching and re-assessment

1 Learn more about the College's Practice Assessments.



Hospital Pharmacist Practice Assessments in 2024

**324** routine assessment:

Hospital Pharmacy Technician Practice Assessments in 2024

**173** routi



99% passed with self-directed learning



**100%** passed with self-directed learning

**1** Learn more about the College's Quality Assurance Program.



Additional indicators related to quality assurance activities can be found in our College Performance Measurement Framework.





#### **Emergency Assignment Registrations in 2024\***



Pharmacists granted emergency assignment registration:

356

Pharmacy technicians granted emergency assignment registration:

80

1 Learn more about emergency assignment registration.

\*The emergency assignment class of registration was closed on August 9, 2024.

### Jurisprudence, Ethics and Professionalism Exam

Of the **1,390** candidates who took the exam in 2024:



800 applied to be pharmacists



**590** applied to be pharmacy technicians

89% passed the exam

i Learn more about the Jurisprudence, Ethics and Professionalism Exam.

### **Registration Committee Requests and Outcomes in 2024**





**123** fully granted









### Practice Assessment of Competence at Entry (PACE) in 2024

Pharmacist candidates attempted PACE

of pharmacist candidates were successful on their first attempt

**11**\* Pharmacy technician candidates attempted PACE

100% of pharmacy technician candidates were successful on their first attempt

\*PACE for pharmacy technician applicants became available in October 2024.

### Structured Practical Training (SPT) in 2024



Pharmacy technician candidates who started SPT\*:

410

\*SPT has been replaced by PACE for pharmacy technician applicants as of October 2024.

1 Learn more about the Jurisprudence, Ethics and Professionalism Exam, PACE and general registration requirements.





### **COMPLAINTS AND REPORTS**

### Number of Complaints and Reports Opened in 2024



Complaints opened: **543** 



Reports opened:

156

**1** <u>Learn more</u> about how the College addresses complaints and reports.

# HEALTH PROFESSIONS APPEAL AND REVIEW BOARD

### Requests at the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (HPARB) in 2024

- 33 new requests for review received in 2024
- **22** from pharmacy professionals
- **11** from complainants

- 29 decisions received from HPARB
- 29 upheld
- referred back to Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee

### **ICRC DECISIONS IN 2024**



464

Total number of decisions issued by the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC):

### **TOP 5 THEMES OF COMPLAINTS AND REPORTS OPENED IN 2024**

### Percentage of Complaints by Theme

Communication	42.3%
Competence/patient care	35.4%
Other conduct and business practices	12.3%
Professional conduct and behaviour	5.7%
Billing and fees	4.2%

### Percentage of Reports by Theme

Other conduct and business practices	29.6%
Professional conduct and behaviour	23.5%
Competence/patient care	21.4%
Communication	8.6%
Billing and fees	7.8%

Note: Complaints and reports may fall under multiple themes.





### **DISCIPLINE**



### Distribution of Discipline Findings by Type in 2024

Contravene relevant Acts	14
Dishonourable, disgraceful, unprofessional	14
False or misleading document	12
Fail to maintain Standard	14
Falsifying records	7
Failure to keep appropriate records	7

1 Learn more about the College's discipline process.

### Discipline Orders by Type in 2024

Revocation	7
Suspension	14
Terms, Conditions and Limitations on a Certificate of Registration	14
Reprimand	21
Undertaking	0

There were 21 discipline orders issued in 2024. More than one type of discipline order may be issued together.

### **Discipline Committee Activities in 2024**



Number of registrants with allegations referred to discipline:

12

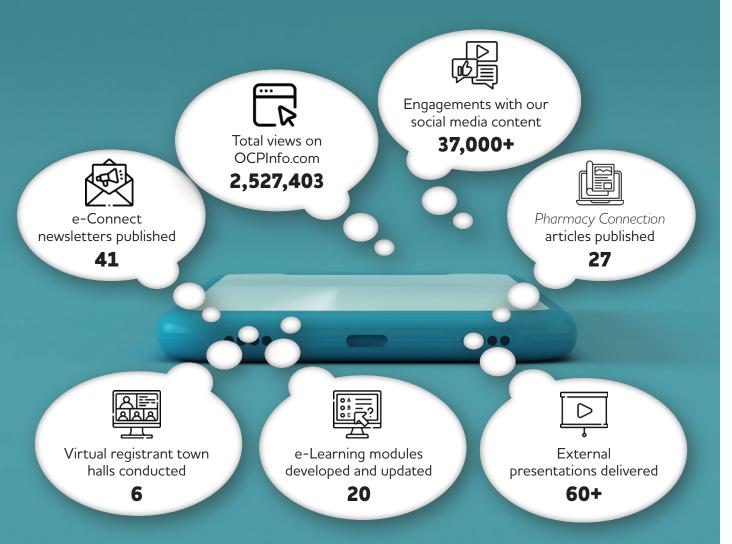


Additional indicators related to complaints, reports and discipline activities can be found in our College Performance

Measurement Framework.



# Engaging with Registrants and the Public



Data shown is from 2024

**REGISTRANT AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES** 



Inquiries to College practice consultants from registrants

2,072



Inquiries to College practice consultants from members of the public

560

# Top five themes of inquiries to practice consultants from registrants:

- 1 Injections
- Prescribing for minor ailments
- College policies, guidelines, position statements and guidance
- Regulatory requirements for pharmacy premises and operations
- Opioids and opioid use disorder treatment

# Top five themes of inquiries to practice consultants from the public:

- College policies, guidelines, position statements and guidance
- 2 Conduct of registrant
- Dispensing fees, billing practices and generic substitutions and interchangeability
- Prescribing for minor ailments
- Injections, renewals and adaptations



# **Supplementary Information**

In addition to this annual report, a number of documents are made publicly available as part of the College's <u>commitment to accountability and transparency</u>.



# COLLEGE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK (CPMF)

#### Read the CPMF

The College Performance Measurement Framework (CPMF) is an annual submission to the Ministry of Health that is intended to strengthen the accountability and oversight of Ontario's health regulatory colleges by providing information that is transparent, consistent and aligned across all colleges on their performance in serving the public's interest. The CPMF consists of seven domains: Governance, Resources, System Partners, Information Management, Regulatory Policies, Suitability to Practice, and Measurement, Reporting and Improvement. Within each domain, specific components such as standards, measures, evidence and planned improvement activities set out expectations and requirements for the colleges to include/respond to in their submitted reports to the Ministry.

### STRATEGIC PLAN

#### Read the Strategic Plan

In 2024, we launched our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, which includes values that express who we are and how we operate, a set of regulatory principles to guide our work and decisions as a regulator, and four strategic goals that we intend to achieve as we fulfill our mandate.

### **COLLEGE PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD**

#### Read the College Performance Dashboard

The College Performance Dashboard reports on how well the College is tracking towards its annual targets and trends on key monitoring measures. Produced on a quarterly basis and released at each scheduled Board meeting, the Dashboard is a valuable accountability and quality improvement tool for the College.

### **2024 SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

#### Read the Summary Financial Statements

The Summary Financial Statements include summary statements of the College's financial position, cash flows, operations and net assets for the previous fiscal year. This document is prepared by an independent auditor.

#### **2024 DISCIPLINE DECISIONS**

#### Read the Discipline Decisions

The College publishes decisions of the Discipline Committee in <u>Pharmacy Connection</u>. A notation and summary of each discipline finding is also available on the pharmacy professional's profile on the <u>Find a Pharmacy or Pharmacy Professional tool</u> on the College's website. Once complete, the full written decision for each hearing is available on <a href="https://www.canlii.org/en/">https://www.canlii.org/en/</a>.



