



2025-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

A Message from COA Leadership

The Canadian Orthopaedic Association (COA) is dedicated to providing value to its members and their patients by advancing the standards of excellence in orthopaedic care across Canada. Our commitment extends to supporting advancements in advocacy, education, research and practice standards, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of orthopaedic innovation and quality care.

This Strategic Plan outlines our vision and specific actions we will undertake across four key areas: improving learning resources, enriching member experiences, optimizing data utilization and fostering unity. Our strategy is designed to support orthopaedic surgeons from residency through retirement, while addressing issues of a transforming profession in a rapidly changing world.

In recent years, we have been privy to discussions and consultations to inform our strategy. Emerging trends in orthopaedics such as the evolving use of deep learning and generative artificial intelligence, regenerative medicine, orthopaedic apps and platforms, advanced prosthetics and orthotics, minimally invasive surgery and a multidisciplinary approach to patient care, to name a few, are just some of the advancements COA is staying current with. With these, changes to the job market, including the changing role and practice models have made way for bigger discussions around wellness and balance.

There are societal issues that are equally part of our overall priorities within the Strategic Plan. These include: Climate Action, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action on Health and Surgeon Health and Wellness. The sentiments of our leadership and membership on these societal issues were considered when drafting this Strategic Plan. Statements about these items can be found on pages 6-10.

As an Association recognized for our global contributions to orthopaedic care for over 80 years, we understand that advancing the profession while leveraging its membership requires a strategy and actions guided by our members' insights and expertise.

We are pleased to present the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, created to benefit and guide our community towards excellence.

Sukhdeep Dulai
President
2025-2026

Pascale Thibaudeau
Strategic Monitor and Member-at-Large

Cynthia Vezina
Chief Executive Officer



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the Island of Montreal, known as Tiohtià:ke in Kanien'kéha, is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Nation. This land has long served as a gathering place for many First Nations, including the Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg peoples. We recognize the Kanien'kehá:ka as the custodians of these lands and waters, where the Canadian Orthopaedic Association has been headquartered since 1948. We are committed to fostering a respectful relationship with Indigenous communities and improving the musculoskeletal health and well-being of all peoples.

See COA's pledge to Truth and Reconciliation on page 10.



About Canadian Orthopaedic Association

The Canadian Orthopaedic Association (COA) is a not-for-profit professional association representing the interests of orthopaedic surgeons in Canada. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of orthopaedic care for Canadian patients, by providing our surgeon members with continuing medical education, subspecialty support, knowledge sharing, advocacy platforms, fellowship programs, leadership opportunities and collaboration with other health care associations.

Mission

The mission of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association is to unite the national orthopaedic community through advocacy, education, research and practice standards.

How this Strategic Plan Was Created

Over a six-month period, the COA conducted a membership-wide survey with questions posed from COA staff and leadership alike. The results of the survey have served as a guide for the Plan's Strategic Priorities, Values and Strategic Enablers. The Plan was modeled after national examples, such as Canadian Institute for Health Research, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, Canadian Medical Protective Association, and academic colleagues such as University of British Columbia, University of Toronto and University of Calgary.

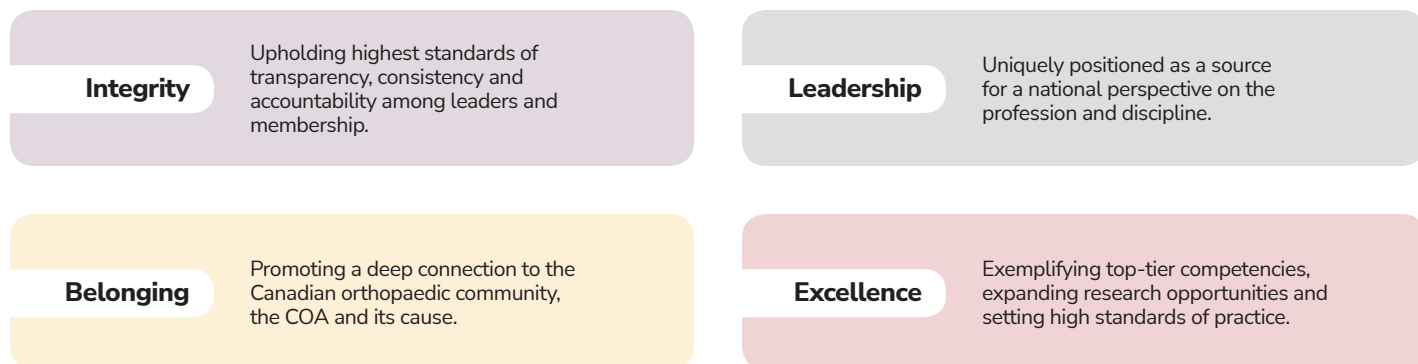
Defining a Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan is an essential tool to guide the Association's leadership and staff on where to focus financial and human capital investment. A Strategic Plan is the document used to inform long-term, realistic objectives outlined by stakeholders it serves. The Plan does not contain operational, logistics or financial projections; instead, it is an intentional document that serves as a reference for long-term goals for the Association.

Strategic Priorities for 2025-2028



Values



How we'll get there

In addition to the Strategic Priorities and Values, the COA will focus on four main Enabling Strategies over the next three years: Improving Learning Assets, Developing Member Experience, Optimizing Data and Promoting Unity.

Improving Learning Assets

Strategic Priority: Education

As signaled by membership, education is of primary interest. To effectively support members with their professional growth, COA will provide more opportunities for applicable and tailored learning.

Defining Success

- Our members will have more offers of virtual and in-person learning experiences, both clinical and non-clinical throughout the year.
- Our learning assets will be closely aligned with accreditation standards and recommendations from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.
- Our professional capacity-building programming will expand to reach more membership categories and be appealing to all career stages.

Developing Member Experience

Strategic Priority: Engagement

Customizing the approach to how our members are cared for within the COA will be a prime focus. We will streamline communications to ensure that our messages to members are concise and clear. As our membership needs shift with career achievements and challenges, the COA will continue to foster a sense of belonging and community for Canadian orthopaedics.

Defining Success

- Our improved member benefits and services will be meaningful within the Canadian context, providing value both operationally and strategically.
- By strengthening our volunteer relationships within governance positions, COA will identify more efficient ways of carrying out leadership responsibilities and new initiatives.
- Updating a recruitment and retention strategy for new and legacy members will transform our member experience by offering further support.

Optimizing Data

Strategic Priority: Advocacy

Making data useful for our membership to advocate for their interests will standardize and support messaging about orthopaedic care provincially and nationally.

Defining Success

- Our unique position as a national body will help membership obtain vetted, credible information and data.
- Participation in partners' information requests and gathering information from partners' will aid in our goal of unity through advocacy.
- Being viewed as a source of credible and noteworthy information will strengthen our members' and public perception of the Association.

Promoting Unity

Strategic Priority: Quality

Encouraging inclusive collaboration among members within Canadian orthopaedics will bolster membership loyalty, uphold the Canadian standards of orthopaedic health care, and elevate the quality of outcomes.

Defining Success

- Supporting research outcomes and facilitating efficient knowledge translation to membership will highlight the quality of Canadian research.
- Dedicating time to thorough due diligence on clinical position statements and guidelines by involving partners and subspecialty societies will ensure that relevant perspectives are included.
- Promoting the adaptation of new efficiencies and evidence-based practices will help standardize orthopaedic care across Canada, thereby unifying the profession.

Program Timeline

YEAR I

June 2025 to June 2026

S. Dulai Presidency

Expansion of existing programs and planning of new programs

YEAR II

June 2026 to June 2027

R. Litchfield Presidency

Refining new programs and evaluating expansions

YEAR III

June 2027 to June 2028

Evaluation of all programs for removal or renewal

Canadian Orthopaedic Association Statement on Climate Action

The Canadian Orthopaedic Association (COA) recognizes the urgent need to address climate change and its impact on health. As part of our commitment to sustainability, we are aligning our contributions with Choosing Wisely Canada's climate action initiative to reduce unnecessary tests, treatments, and procedures that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Acknowledgment of Environmental Impact: The health care sector is responsible for nearly 5% of net global greenhouse gas emissions. This includes emissions from material waste, energy-intensive procedures, and the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals. By reducing unnecessary practices, we can make a positive contribution to both patient health and the environment.

Choosing Wisely Climate-Conscious

Recommendations: Choosing Wisely Canada has introduced climate-conscious recommendations aimed at mobilizing clinicians to stop or reduce low-value practices that harm the environment without compromising patient care. Over 20 clinical specialties have collaborated to create more than 40 recommendations to achieve this goal.

Current Efforts and Progress: The COA is committed to helping its membership understand and implement climate-conscious recommendations within the field of musculoskeletal and orthopaedic care. This includes promoting reductions and efficiencies in everyday practices and minimizing the use of single-use items.

Future Commitments: Our vision is to inform musculoskeletal and orthopaedic health practice standards on how to reduce environmental footprint and integrate sustainable practices into care models. We will continue to participate in the Choosing Wisely Canada initiative and provide education for our leadership and membership.

The COA reaffirms its commitment to climate action and the pursuit of sustainability in health care. This commitment is in alignment with our mission to provide excellence in orthopaedic care through leadership, advocacy, education and research. We invite our members, partners and stakeholders to join us in this effort to improve the musculoskeletal and orthopaedic health and well-being of all Canadians while protecting our planet.

Sources:

World Economic Forum. (2020). Protecting planet and people: Healthcare's climate roadmap. *World Economic Forum*.
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/protecting-planet-and-people-healthcare-s-climate-roadmap/>

Choosing Wisely Canada. (2023). Introducing Choosing Wisely Canada's climate-conscious recommendations. *Choosing Wisely Canada*.
Retrieved from <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/introducing-choosing-wisely-canadas-climate-conscious-recommendations/>



Canadian Orthopaedic Association Statement on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)

The Canadian Orthopaedic Association (COA) is committed to fostering diversity throughout its membership, leadership, research, education, service and community engagement, both individually and collectively among members. We value the strength that diversity brings and strive to create an equitable and inclusive culture where all individuals are given equal access to opportunities to thrive.

Importance of addressing DEIB: The COA DEIB Statement applies to all members and staff of the organization. Informed by the principles of social justice and responsibility, the statement reflects the Association's commitment to fostering excellence, collaboration, engagement, and respect by embracing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as core values.

The COA will:

- Promote an inclusive community within its membership and the broader orthopaedic community, where diversity is valued, and every individual feels respected and included. Our understanding of diversity includes but is not limited to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, geography, religion, and socio-economic status.
- Advance DEIB by intentionally creating equitable opportunities for participation and leadership for all individuals, focusing on supporting groups who have historically faced societal and workplace barriers and discrimination; women, visible minorities, and people with visible and nonvisible disabilities.
- Continue to develop and sustain programs and policies that support underrepresented groups within the orthopaedic community. We are dedicated to promoting equitable recruitment and retention practices to ensure diversity among orthopaedic surgeons in Canada. Through these efforts, we aim to uphold principles of social justice by fostering the full participation of diverse individuals in all aspects of the COA.

- Recognize and affirm that every individual has the right to be treated with respect and acceptance, free from bias or discrimination.
- Develop and communicate policies and promote values that actively discourage intolerance and discrimination.
- Encourage all orthopaedic surgeons to develop, foster, promote, and maintain a workplace environment that prioritizes and respects diversity. Interactions with colleagues, staff, patients, and families should consistently be free from discrimination or harassment and reflect the values of fairness, dignity, and respect.

Sources:

McKinsey. Women Matter: Time to Accelerate. Ten years of insights into gender diversity. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-matter-ten-years-of-insights-on-genderdiversity>; 2017.

Hiemstra LA, Wittman T, Mulpuri K, Vezina C, Kerslake S. Dissecting disparity: improvements towards gender parity in leadership and on the podium within the Canadian Orthopaedic Association. *Journal of ISAKOS: Joint Disorders & Orthopaedic Sports Medicine* 2019; 4:227-232.

Canadian Orthopaedic Association. (2019). *COA Diversity Strategic Plan*. Retrieved from COA website.



Canadian Orthopaedic Association Statement on Surgeon Health and Wellness

The Canadian Orthopaedic Association (COA) recognizes the unique challenges that orthopaedic surgeons face, impacting their well-being and ability to provide high-quality care. Attending to the health and wellness of orthopaedic surgeons in Canada is a shared responsibility of the profession itself, the health systems and organizations in which surgeons are educated and practise, and individual surgeons. Wellness issues among surgeons affect every aspect of our health care systems. They impact not only the individual surgeons but also their families, colleagues, work and learning environments and patients. The COA emphasizes the importance of maintaining high standards of care and professionalism, which includes prioritizing the health and wellness of surgeons in Canada.

Importance of Addressing Surgeon Wellness:

Prioritizing the health and wellness of orthopaedic surgeons leads to better patient outcomes, improved surgical precision, stability in the surgical workforce and more cost-effective health care. Healthy surgeons are more likely to perform their best, providing compassionate and effective care and contributing to a more resilient health care system.

Royal College of Physician and Surgeons of Canada

Recommendations: The RCPSC Physician Wellness Task Force has introduced **fifteen evidence-based recommendations** that discuss measures for awareness and development, sustainability and support. The list is not exhaustive; however, the Task Force signaled the importance of institutions and educational programs to implement the recommendations to each of their own contexts.

Known Challenges:

- **Physical Strain:** The physically demanding nature of orthopaedic procedures and the constrained environments in which they are performed often lead to injury, degenerative conditions and/or chronic pain.
- **Administrative Burdens:** Increased time spent in administrative tasks, such as documentation, and workflow inefficiencies contribute to surgeons feeling a loss of professional fulfillment.
- **Emotional Stress and Moral Injury:** Orthopaedic surgeons manage high patient loads and intense interactions with people who have great physical and emotional needs. In combination with systemic constraints creating barriers to providing safe, effective and timely medical care to patients and organizational cultures that discourage surgeons from speaking out and lack effective mechanisms for change, the result is significant psychological distress in the form of moral injury. Moral injury predisposes surgeons to the development of mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety. Moral injury can lead to burnout, which adversely affects patient safety and quality of patient care and contributes to medical errors, a loss of productivity and attrition in the surgical workforce.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Long and irregular work hours, after-hours administrative and clinical demands and on-call duties can make it difficult for orthopaedic surgeons to maintain a healthy work-life balance, negatively affecting personal and professional relationships and both mental and physical personal health.
- **Suicide:** Surgeon suicide rates are alarmingly high, with contributing factors including anxiety, depression, burnout, mental health stigma, and untreated psychological distress. Frustrations over administrative burdens, electronic health records, increasing workloads, loss of autonomy and an apparent lack of agency for change can lead to depression and suicide.

Meeting the challenge: Our vision is to facilitate optimization of care for orthopaedic patients by promoting initiatives and policies which will contribute to healthier working conditions and environments for orthopaedic surgeons across Canada. This will be achieved through heightened advocacy (in partnership with provincial associations and strategic partners), modeling within our own organization and, education centered on evidence-based principles. These strategies will target our membership and leadership, health care organizations and policymakers. The principles will include the RCPSC Task Force guiding principles and recommendations, other institutional partners' findings on physician wellness, as they pertain to the orthopaedic and surgical context and issues identified by our own membership.



The COA reaffirms its commitment to promoting surgeon health and wellness. This dedication aligns with our mission to provide excellence in orthopaedic care through leadership, advocacy, education and research. We invite our members, partners and stakeholders to join us in this effort to advance the well-being of orthopaedic surgeons and improve the overall health care system for all Canadians.

Sources:

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. (n.d.). Physician wellness. Retrieved from <https://www-test.royalcollege.ca/content/rcpsc/ca/en/canmeds/physician-wellness.html>

Canadian Medical Association. CMA Policy on Physician Health. Ottawa: Canadian Medical Association; 2017

Wallace JE, Lemaire JB, Ghali WA. Physician wellness: a missing quality indicator. *Lancet* 2009;374:1714-21. Available: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(09\)61424-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)61424-0).

Shanafelt, T. D., Boone, S., Tan, L., Dyrbye, L. N., Sotile, W., Satele, D., ... & Oreskovich, M. R. (2012). Burnout and satisfaction with work-life balance among US physicians relative to the general US population. *JAMA Surgery*, 147(11), 1052-1055. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamasurgery/fullarticle/404847>

American College of Surgeons. (n.d.). *Surgical ergonomics recommendations*. Retrieved from https://www.facs.org/media/tdeemrnw/23_ed_surgicalergonomicsrecommendations_pdf_v4.pdf



Canadian Orthopaedic Association Statement on Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations for Musculoskeletal and Orthopaedic Care

Introduction: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada was established to address the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. This statement aims to highlight the TRC's recommendations for health, specifically in the context of musculoskeletal and orthopaedic care, and the importance of addressing these recommendations.

Acknowledgment of Past Wrongs: We acknowledge the historical injustices faced by Indigenous peoples, particularly the detrimental impact of residential schools on their health and well-being. The legacy of these schools has led to significant health disparities, including in the realm of musculoskeletal and orthopaedic health, that continue to affect Indigenous communities today.

TRC Recommendations: The TRC has issued several recommendations focused on improving Indigenous health (Calls to Action 18-24). These recommendations include acknowledging the current state of Indigenous health, establishing measurable goals to close health outcome gaps, and providing sustainable funding for Indigenous healing centres.

Current Efforts and Progress: The federal government has taken steps to address these recommendations, including establishing measurable goals and providing funding for healing centres. In the field of musculoskeletal and orthopaedic care, efforts are being made to ensure equitable access to care and to integrate traditional Indigenous healing practices with contemporary medical treatments.

Future Commitments: Our vision is to contribute to equitable musculoskeletal and orthopaedic health outcomes for Indigenous peoples. We will endorse and promote strategies that address health disparities in this specific area, offer cultural competency training for COA leadership, and support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous health-care providers specializing in musculoskeletal and orthopaedic care.

We reaffirm our commitment to the TRC recommendations and the pursuit of reconciliation, particularly in the realm of musculoskeletal and orthopaedic health. This commitment is in alignment with our mission to provide excellence in orthopaedic care through leadership, advocacy, education and research. We invite our members, partners, and stakeholders to join us in this effort to improve the musculoskeletal and orthopaedic health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Sources:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action - This document outlines the TRC's recommendations, including those related to health (Calls to Action 18-24).

Government of Canada's Response to TRC Calls to Action - This page provides information on how the Government of Canada is addressing the TRC's Calls to Action, specifically those related to health.

Health care access and experiences among Indigenous people, 2024 - This report from Statistics Canada provides data on health care access and experiences among Indigenous people, highlighting disparities in care.

Enhancing health care equity with Indigenous populations: evidence-based strategies from an ethnographic study - This research article discusses strategies for promoting health care equity for Indigenous populations.

Osteoarthritis in Indigenous populations in rural British Columbia: Disparities in prevalence and access to care - This article from the British Columbia Medical Journal discusses disparities in the prevalence and access to care for osteoarthritis among Indigenous populations.

