



Canadian Association of Optometrists calls on Government to lead on eye health

June 14, 2022 (Ottawa) After years of advocating for federal leadership on eye health and vision care, the Canadian Association of Optometrist (CAO) calls on all members of Parliament for swift passage of Private Member's Bill C-284 '*An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care*', introduced in the House of Commons today by the Honourable Judy Sgro, Member of Parliament for Humber River – Black Creek.

"Today's legislation reflects years of work by the CAO and its partners - the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, the Canadian Council of the Blind, CNIB, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Diabetes Canada, Fighting Blindness Canada and the Opticians Association of Canada – to make vision health a priority for all Canadians," said Dr. Harry Bohnsack, President of CAO's Council.

The annual cost of vision loss is \$15.6B. The financial burden on the system is unnecessarily high, when we know that vision loss can be prevented or treated in 75% of cases. Perhaps more significant than the fiscal cost is the social and psychological toll on the 1.2M Canadians (3.2% of the population) living with vision loss.

While CAO has been involved in raising awareness about eye health and vision care for decades, it realized that more was required in order to make eye health, vision care and rehabilitation services a population health priority. To meet that objective requires leadership and coordination, manifest in a Vision Health Desk housed within the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). A Vision Desk would be responsible for the development and implementation of an evidence-based vision strategy that includes research, public education, a consistent and reliable supply of medications required to treat eye diseases and/or conditions and enhanced access for Indigenous peoples and other priority populations (children and seniors).

CAO recognizes that while federal leadership is critical, that all those involved in the delivery of eye health services have a role to play in supporting a successful outcome and pledges its ongoing collaboration to the realization of these objectives.

"Ms. Sgro's legislation is a positive first step for ensuring the eye health and vision care of all Canadians," Dr. Bohnsack said. "CAO will continue to work with Ms. Sgro and all members of Parliament to ensure that the objectives outlined in the legislation she has introduced will save our sight".

– 30 –

About the Canadian Association of Optometrists

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is the national voice of optometry, dedicated to providing leadership and support to its members to enhance the delivery of healthy eyes and clear vision for all Canadians. For more information, visit www.opto.ca

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