

**Vision care is health care: Canada's vision health stakeholders collectively stress the need to support vision care in federal budget**

**Toronto, ON – March 28, 2023** – Today, the Government of Canada has shown its commitment and leadership towards health care in the country with the federal budget announcement, a positive step towards putting the health of Canadians, including Indigenous communities, at the forefront.

Following this announcement, the national vision health stakeholders – Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Canadian Association of Optometrists, Canadian Council of the Blind, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Canadian Ophthalmological Society, Fighting Blindness Canada, and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada – have come together to stress the need to allocate a portion of the funding to address vision care in Canada.

More than 1.2 million Canadians live with vision loss today, and over 8 million Canadians live with one of the four major eye diseases. Blinding diseases affect older adults (55+) at much higher rates, and as Canada's population ages, the number of individuals affected by vision impairment will rise. However, 75 per cent of visual impairment is avoidable if detected and treated early.

In 2019, [the total cost of vision loss](#) in Canada was \$32.9 billion, resulting in 9.5 billion in direct health system costs. This consists of a total financial cost of \$15.6 billion and a lost well-being cost of \$17.4 billion, and is expected to grow to \$56 billion by 2050. Yet, studies have shown that early access to diagnosis and treatment saves money in the long run.

Post-COVID, surgery backlogs, and the results of individuals not achieving proper care have combined to exacerbate vision health issues in Canada, which cost the government even more to deal with the impacts. For this reason, the Honourable Judy Sgro, Member of Parliament for Humber River – Black Creek, introduced a Private Member's Bill [C-284](#) last June, "*An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care*".

To achieve this, the vision health community has been advocating for a **National Vision Health Desk** at the Public Health Agency of Canada which will:

- Support health promotion and disease prevention by promoting public awareness and providing the government with information on the most critical eye diseases and best practices to protect vision health.
- Provide advice and expertise to the Federal Government on the use and availability of eye drugs and technologies; insight and analysis of data in eye care, best practices in vision rehabilitation; and the development and implementation of eye health programs.
- Prioritize dedicated funding for vision research to advance development of innovative diagnostics and treatments and access solutions to improve outcomes and quality of life for people living with vision loss.

Given the importance of vision health and its substantial impact on overall health spending, the national vision health stakeholders look forward to having further discussions with the Government of Canada to see where vision care can be supported under this new budget. With the goal of working collaboratively with provinces and territories, the strategies developed will create efficient, cost-effective access to eye health and vision care to all Canadians.

For more information, visit [www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/c-284](http://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/c-284).

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### **About Canada's Vision Health Stakeholders**

Canada's vision health stakeholders, not-for-profit organizations, are united in their support of the establishment of a National Vision Health Desk (under the responsibility of the Minister of Health) and a National Eye Care Strategy. Together, they believe that the National Vision Health Desk will be the driving force behind the creation of a National Eye Care Strategy (as proposed in MP Judy Sgro's Private Members Bill C-284). They support the legislation outlined in the Bill. The affiliated vision health stakeholders include:

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists: [www.caot.ca](http://www.caot.ca); Canadian Association of Optometrists: [www.opto.ca](http://www.opto.ca); Canadian Council of the Blind: [www.ccbnational.net](http://www.ccbnational.net); Canadian National Institute for the Blind: [www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca); Canadian Ophthalmological Society: [www.cos-sco.ca](http://www.cos-sco.ca); Fighting Blindness Canada: [www.fightingblindness.ca](http://www.fightingblindness.ca); Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada: [www.visionlossrehab.ca](http://www.visionlossrehab.ca)