

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canada's Vision Health Partners Applaud Parliament's Passage of Bill C-284, the National Strategy for Eye Care Act

Legislation lays planning groundwork for Canadians to access essential eye health services

Ottawa, ON – [November 7, 2024] – The recent passage of Bill C-284, the *National Strategy for Eye Care Act* by the Government of Canada marks a significant advancement in the country's commitment to eye health and vision care. This legislation sets forth a comprehensive framework to develop a national strategy to improve eye care and rehabilitation services, invest in research to provide treatments and cures, increase accessibility and promote eye health education nationwide, ensuring all Canadians will have access to essential eye health services.

As a collaborative unit of eye health advocacy groups, Canada's Vision Health Partners have been working diligently over the past two years on behalf of Canadians to develop solutions that address gaps in patient access to care and vision rehabilitation. Balance for Blind Adults, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Canadian Association of Optometrists, Canadian Council of the Blind, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Canadian Ophthalmological Society, Diabetes Canada, Fighting Blindness Canada, International Federation on Aging, Opticians Association of Canada, and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, have long advocated for such measures, recognizing the critical importance of vision health and rehabilitation to overall well-being and quality of life.

Vision loss is an issue that affects over 1.2 million Canadians today, with more than eight million living with one of the top four eye diseases—age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. [Bill C-284](#) encompasses several key initiatives that will help improve prevention, treatment and vision rehabilitation for patients across Canada, including the designation of the month of February as *Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month*.

Canada's Vision Health Partners extend their gratitude to the members of Parliament and Senators for championing this vital legislation, including the Honourable Judy Sgro, who proposed Bill C-284 as a private members bill. Their dedication to improving the health and well-being of Canadians has culminated in a significant policy achievement that will have a lasting impact.

Quotes

"The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists applauds the passage of Bill C-284 and acknowledges the importance of united, purposeful action to ensure equitable access to vision care for everyone living in Canada. Occupational therapists are essential in supporting individuals with low vision and blindness, helping them participate fully in meaningful activities and achieve their life goals."
– Irving Gold, CEO, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists

“The passage of Bill C-284 is a milestone in making eye care a priority for all Canadians. This legislation embodies our commitment to establishing eye health as a national priority, ensuring regular, proactive care is promoted at every level.”

– Dr. Martin Spiro, President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists

“The passage of Bill C-284 is a major step towards ensuring that vision rehabilitation of people who are blind, deaf- blind or partially sighted is integrated into the continuum of care and that all Canadians achieve the best possible vision health.”

– Jim Tokos, National President, Canadian Council of the Blind

“CNIB celebrates the passage of the National Strategy for Eye Care Act. We now turn our attention to putting together the strategy that will support the prevention, treatment of eye diseases and vision rehabilitation. Our hope is that this strategy will help increase the number of children who get eye exams before entering school, and ultimately give those with unavoidable blindness the supports they need to thrive.”

– Angela Bonfanti, President and CEO, CNIB

“We are extremely pleased with the passage of Bill C-284 as this legislation underscores the importance of advancing vision health, and a step forward to ensuring optimal eye care for all Canadians. Prioritizing vision care improves lives and strengthens our economy, which helps build a healthier society for all Canadians.”

– Dr. Mona Harissi-Dagher, President, Canadian Ophthalmological Society

“With diabetic retinopathy affecting nearly one million people in Canada and leading to new cases of blindness each year, the passage of Bill-C284, the National Strategy for Eye Care Act is a critical step toward protecting the health and quality of life for people living with diabetes. Nearly all people in Canada with type 1 diabetes and more than 60 per cent with type 2 will face some degree of retinopathy over time, so this strategy is needed to reduce the serious health impacts of sight loss, including increased risk of falls and mortality.”

– Laura Syron, President & CEO, Diabetes Canada

“An investment in research is an investment in hope. As we look to the future, the creation of a National Eye Care Strategy will help advance treatments and technology which have meaningful impacts on the quality of life for Canadians with vision loss and their caregivers.”

– Jennifer Jones, President and CEO, Fighting Blindness Canada

“The passing of Bill C-284 marks a significant milestone in advancing eye health for all Canadians. This achievement highlights the impactful work healthcare associations can accomplish when collaborating on issues that unite us as a nation. At the Opticians Association of Canada, we are proud to support initiatives that protect and enhance the vision health of Canadians, and we look forward to collaborating with our partners across the eye care community to drive further progress.”

– Claudia Rojas, President, Opticians Association of Canada

“Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada looks forward to a future in which all Canadians have improved access to the vision health professionals which support their independence and well-being. Bill C-284

prioritizes the ability of Canadians to live the lives they choose by promoting awareness about their vision health and the services they need.”

– Jennifer Urosevic, President & CEO, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada

About Canada’s Vision Health Partners

Canada’s Vision Health Partners is a group of not-for-profit organizations that 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.

The affiliated vision health partners include:

- Balance for Blind Adults: www.balancefba.org
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists: www.caot.ca
- Canadian Association of Optometrists: www.opto.ca
- Canadian Council of the Blind: www.ccbnational.net
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind: www.cnib.ca
- Canadian Ophthalmological Society: www.cos-sco.ca
- Diabetes Canada: www.diabetes.ca
- Fighting Blindness Canada: www.fightingblindness.ca
- International Federation on Aging: www.ifa.ngo
- Opticians Association of Canada: www.opticians.ca
- Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada: www.visionlossrehab.ca

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