



The Canadian Association of Optometrists Welcomes the Federal Government's National Strategy for Eye Care

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ottawa, ON, June 5, 2026 – The Canadian Association of Optometrists welcomes the release of Canada's first-ever National Strategy for Eye Care, a significant step forward for the millions of Canadians living with preventable or treatable eye conditions, and for the optometrists who care for them every day.

Vision health is fundamental to how Canadians live, work, and learn. Yet too many people, particularly those in rural and remote communities, Indigenous Peoples, and lower-income Canadians, face real barriers to accessing the eye care they need. This strategy acknowledges those gaps and sets a direction for addressing them.

At the heart of that solution are optometrists. The strategy recognizes optometrists as primary vision-care professionals and signals growing federal acknowledgment of their essential role as the primary entry point for eye health care in Canada. Whether it's early detection of glaucoma, management of diabetic eye disease, or ensuring children have the vision they need to succeed in school, optometrists are where Canadians turn first.

"For too long, eye health has been an underrecognized part of Canada's health care system. This strategy changes that conversation. It acknowledges the critical role optometrists play in keeping Canadians healthy and seeing well and focuses on some of the systemic changes our patients and our profession have needed for years," notes CAO President, Dr. Allison Scott.

CAO is particularly encouraged by the strategy's recognition of the need to grow and better distribute Canada's optometric workforce. The strategy highlights exploratory partnerships to establish new optometry schools in Alberta and New Brunswick, reflecting the sustained advocacy of CAO and our members to expand optometric education in Canada.

The strategy also identifies the need to better integrate optometry into Canada's broader health system, a key step toward ensuring Canadians receive more connected, coordinated care.

There is important work ahead, and CAO will be actively engaged as Health Canada develops its implementation plan, advocating for policies that put patients first and ensure optometrists are fully supported in meeting Canada's growing eye health needs.

“With the tabling of the National Strategy for Care, the next phase of work begins,” added Dr. Scott. “To truly make vision health a priority for all Canadians, it must be fully resourced, and CAO looks forward to working with Health Canada to ensure effective implementation that sees optometrists, patient groups and the vision partners at the centre of that change.”

The CAO would also like to acknowledge the Honourable Judy Sgro for her tireless advocacy and steadfast commitment to advancing eye health and vision care in Canada. From her introduction of Bill C-284 through the development of the National Strategy for Eye Care, her leadership, persistence, and dedication have helped lay the foundation for meaningful progress in improving eye health outcomes for Canadians.

Read the full National Strategy for eye Care at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/national-strategy-eye-care.html>

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About the Canadian Association of Optometrists

Optometrists are independent primary health care providers and represent the front line of vision health. Optometrists practice in various settings: most work in private practice, others work in clinics, hospitals, community health centres, corporate optometry, research, teaching and administration. The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is the national voice of optometry. Recognized at home and internationally as a leading advocate for the profession, CAO provides leadership and support to its 8,300+ members (optometrists, students and optometric assistants) to enhance the delivery of healthy eyes and clear vision for all Canadians.

For more information, visit www.opto.ca. For media inquiries, please contact: Rhona Lahey, Communications Advisor, rlahey@opto.ca