



Canadians support a federal role in eye health and vision care

OTTAWA, May 5, 2017 – Canadians from coast to coast support Federal Government involvement in eye health and vision care, something the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) believes is necessary to combat an emerging crisis in eye health and vision care.

Last month, the CAO commissioned Nanos Research to conduct a survey to determine Canadians' support for federal government involvement in eye health and vision care. The results are in and a majority of Canadians agree there is a role for the Federal Government.

“Vision loss is the disability most feared by Canadians and more than 5.5 million Canadians have vision-threatening eye conditions,” says CAO President Barry Thienes. “We need the Federal Government to exercise leadership in this area to ensure that the highest standard of vision care is met across the country.”

The survey also asked respondents to rate the level of priority for vision care in terms of the health of Canadians, and they gave it an average priority rating of 8.3 out of 10, higher than support for either dental or hearing care. The level of priority given to vision care supports the CAO's contention that eye health and vision care requires collective and immediate action by the Federal Government, eye health and vision providers, rehabilitation professionals and vision research funders.

The CAO recently collaborated with other eye health organizations to develop [*The Federal Role in Eye Health and Vision Care*](#), which makes five recommendations for pursuing eye health, vision care and rehabilitation services as a population health priority:

- A pan-Canadian Framework for Action;
- Research funding across the eye health continuum;
- Enhanced access to care for Indigenous peoples;
- Funding for collaborative vision care pilot projects; and
- Public education on eye health as a core component of overall health.

75% of all vision loss is preventable or treatable, yet there is little public awareness about eye health. The Nanos poll confirmed that many Canadians say the federal and provincial governments should have a role in eye health, with a majority expressing support for federal government involvement in the creation of a national vision health strategy. The emerging crisis in eye health and vision care crisis in Canada makes it a public health priority. CAO welcomes an opportunity to work collectively with all vision sector stakeholders – including the Federal Government – to ensure access to optimal eye health and vision care for all Canadians.

About the Canadian Association of Optometrists

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is the national voice of optometry, dedicated to collaboratively advancing the highest standard of primary eye care through the promotion of optimal vision and eye health. For more information, go to opto.ca.



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Media contact: Rhona Lahey, Director, Communications & Marketing / 613-23-7924, x. 213 or rlahey@opto.ca