

## EYE HEALTH: A Public Health Imperative

Despite an emerging crisis in chronic vision impairment, eye health and vision care are largely absent from Canada's public health agenda.

Vision impairment is a significant health problem that affects an individual's health, economic well-being, and productivity.

### IN CANADA:



5.5 million (1 in 7) have vision threatening eye conditions, and the prevalence of vision loss is expected to increase by nearly 30% in the next decade.



After age 40, cases of vision loss double every decade and triple at age 75.



Four of the major causes of blindness (AMD, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy) are age related and often have no early warning signs or symptoms.



Vision loss has the highest direct health care cost of any other disease. By 2032, vision loss is expected to cost Canadians \$30.3 billion.

And yet 75% of all vision loss and blindness is, in fact, preventable or treatable with early intervention. A comprehensive eye examination can detect not only eye disease, but the early signs of other chronic conditions such as diabetes, thyroid disease, brain tumours and high blood pressure. Timely access to primary eye care will reduce blindness and vision impairment and is vital to reduce the heavy social and economic costs associated with avoidable vision loss and blindness.

Canada needs a comprehensive eye health and vision care strategy that maximizes the health, independence, and economic participation of its citizens. As the national voice of Canada's primary eye care professionals, the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is appealing to the federal government to recognize and promote primary eye care as a core component of health care.

When Canada signed the World Health Organization's VISION 2020 in 2003, it agreed to eliminate the main causes of all preventable and treatable blindness as a public health issue by the year 2020.

### IT'S 2018. WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

CAO looks forward to partnering with all stakeholders to achieve optimal eye health for all Canadians.

