



A CAO ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

A NATIONAL VISION FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION  
To Promote Eye Health and Prevent Vision Loss 2016

Canada's Doctors of Optometry (ODs) are seeking better and more efficient delivery of eye health and vision care services for all Canadians. Improving access to vision care and rehabilitation services is also a priority. In order for Canadians to have access to the quality eye care they deserve, vision health needs to become a priority in healthcare discussions.

- Vision loss is the most feared disability for Canadians (69%)<sup>1</sup>
- Over 75% of vision loss is preventable<sup>2</sup>
- The number of blind and visually impaired Canadians has increased 37% in the last 10 years and is expected to double between 2006 and 2031<sup>3</sup>
- 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<sup>4</sup>

There is a crisis emerging in eye health and vision care in Canada. Given Canada's aging population, age related eye disease is set to skyrocket in the near future. A patient-centered, collaborative and accessible model of eye care delivery will be essential to prevent unnecessary vision loss. The cost of improperly managing age-related chronic conditions will be high. Improved access to primary care and early detection of disease through public education is critical.

Within the next 20 years the number of Canadians with vision loss is expected to double. In order to appropriately respond to Canadians' vision health needs, the Canadian Association of Optometrists supports a collaborative and integrated patient-centered model that maximizes the scope of

practice and training of eye care professionals, reduces costs and focusses on efficient eye care delivery.

On the other end of the spectrum, 1 in 4 school-aged children has a vision problem. Many serious eye conditions do not have obvious symptoms and some eye disorders only become apparent when the condition is advanced and difficult, if not impossible, to treat. Regular, comprehensive eye exams, from an early age, are essential for identifying potential problems and reducing the risk of permanent vision loss.

As Canada's primary eye health and vision care professionals, Doctors of Optometry are well-placed to deliver improved eye health for all Canadians.

Canada needs a comprehensive plan focused on prevention and on maximizing the health, independence, and economic participation of its citizens.



## Recommendations:

- Establish a National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health and Prevent Vision Loss.
- Establish a federally-funded public awareness campaign around the importance of vision health.

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1. Environics Research Group, 2003
  2. Canadian National Institute for the Blind, (CNIB) <http://www.cnib.ca/en/Pages/default.aspx>
  3. *One in six children has a vision problem (American Optometric Association, Pediatric Eye and Vision Examinations, 2002)*
  4. *The Cost of Vision Loss, 2012*, CNIB and The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS)



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS  
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