

## Federal leadership required for eye health and vision care

**OTTAWA, May 9, 2019** – As part of Vision Health Month, the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is once again headed to Parliament Hill next week to advocate for federal government leadership in responding to the emerging crisis in eye health and vision care.

An estimated 5.6 million – one in seven - Canadians are living with one of the four major eye diseases that can cause blindness, a figure that will increase significantly over the next decade given the aging population. Last month an Ipsos poll commissioned by CAO and Fighting Blindness Canada, the largest private funder of vision research in the country, found that 76% of Canadians identified loss of vision as the disability they feared losing the most.

“While many forms of vision loss are preventable if treated early, too many Canadians don’t get regular eye exams that would help identify and stop blinding eye diseases in their tracks,” said Doug Earle, President and CEO of Fighting Blindness Canada. “It’s important for government to take the necessary step of educating Canadians about the importance of vision care, and to fund critical research into blinding eye diseases for which we currently don’t have treatments and cures.”

CAO is once again joining forces with the CNIB and Fighting Blindness Canada to advocate for the five recommendations of [The Federal Role in Eye Health and Vision Care](#), which outlines how the federal government can enhance health and vision care for all Canadians, while prioritizing the needs of children, seniors and Indigenous peoples. One of the recommendations is for a national public education campaign on vision health as a core component of overall health.

“CAO is concerned that many Canadians have little or no awareness of the signs and factors for vision loss,” according to Dr. Michael Dennis. “Vision health needs to be made a public health priority and we want to work with our partners, other stakeholders and the federal government to ensure optimal eye health for all Canadians.”

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### **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](http://opto.ca).

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