

Canadians support eye exams as a requirement before entering kindergarten

OTTAWA, May 16, 2019 – An overwhelming majority of Canadians - 90% - support requiring an eye exam for children before they enter kindergarten as a public health measure, according to research commissioned by the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO).

CAO commissioned Pollara Strategic Insights to conduct a survey to determine Canadians' comfort with access to eye health and vision care for children. The CAO was interested in Canadians' support for eye health as a component of public health, as well as individual practice. While support for eye health as a component of public health was quite high, when asked about their own practice, two in three Canadians (67%) indicated they had or would take their child for an eye exam before kindergarten. Although 60% of Canadians said they were aware that most children with vision problems do not complain about them because they think that whatever they see is normal, the number one reason cited by 20% of people who would not take their child for an eye exam was that their child's eyesight was fine and they didn't have any issues with their vision.

"This belief that children can't have a vision issue is problematic," according to Dr. Michael Dennis, President of the Association. "Children learn pretty quickly how to compensate for issues with their vision, but that often results in a child not having their vision issue treated for longer, which could have a negative effect on learning."

Vision and ocular health conditions are not always accompanied by recognizable symptoms. There is often an increased risk to the patient if treatment is not initiated in a timely manner. Relying on the occurrence of obvious symptoms exposes a child to unnecessary risk. The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) developed evidence-based guidelines to help determine the need for a comprehensive eye examination by a qualified Optometrist. These guidelines recommend that children have an eye examination between the ages of 6 to 9 months, again before starting kindergarten and annually until 19 years of age.

-30-

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.

Media contact:

Rhona Lahey / Director, Communications and Marketing / 613-235-7924, x. 213 / rlahey@opto.ca