

# ***Our Vision of Vision Health.***

***The National Coalition for Vision Health***

The National  
Coalition for  
VISION  
HEALTH



Coalition  
nationale pour la  
SANTÉ  
VISUELLE

Revised January, 2008

Canada's population is aging. This process will accelerate in 2011 when the first baby boomers (1946-1965) turn 65. By 2031, approximately 24% of the population will be over the age of 65. Canada is headed for a potential **epidemic of age related eye disease**. The vision health care workforce will not be able to keep pace with the demand for its services. As but one example the ratio of ophthalmologists to patients over 65 is projected to rise to from ~1:4300 to ~1:7500 in the next 14 years. **Avoidable vision loss** will increase dramatically. Vision loss is a serious and costly health issue that will result in significant personal suffering, disability, diminished quality of life, loss of productivity and tremendous economic impact unless we intervene.

The National Coalition for Vision Health (NCVH) believes that developing and implementing a **Vision Plan For Canada** – a Plan of Action to Promote Vision Health and Prevent Avoidable Blindness in Canada - is the key to averting this vision loss crisis. We are asking for your support for this initiative.

### **Who is the National Coalition For Vision Health?**

**NCVH** is a not-for-profit organization of associations that share a common interest in eye care and vision research. The Coalition provides national leadership on Canada's vision health issues and in the development of related public policy. NCVH accomplishes its goals through the mandates of its member associations by consultation, collaboration, advocacy, research, education and service. The Coalition believes that all Canadians are entitled to full and equal access to eye care.

Members include:

1. Canadian Institutes of Health Research-INMHA,
2. CNIB,
3. Canadian Ophthalmological Society,
4. Foundation Fighting Blindness - Canada,
5. Canadian Association of Optometrists,
6. Opticians Association of Canada,
7. Vision Health Research Council of Canada
8. Public Health Agency of Canada, Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control as participant observer.

## **Moving Towards a Vision Plan for Canada:**

This past February NCVH hosted a one and one-half day **workshop** in Toronto to “**Develop a National Plan of Action for the Promotion of Vision Health and the Prevention of Avoidable Blindness in Canada**”. Invited participants included academics, clinicians, researchers, NGOs, representatives from the Federal and Provincial governments as well as international guests from Australia, United Kingdom and the United States.

The keynote speaker was **Professor Hugh R. Taylor**, Managing Director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia speaking on “Developing a National Eye Health Plan for Australia – Lessons Learned”.

**The Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Clement**, in his official greetings to the workshop participants, reaffirmed his government’s strong commitment to vision health.

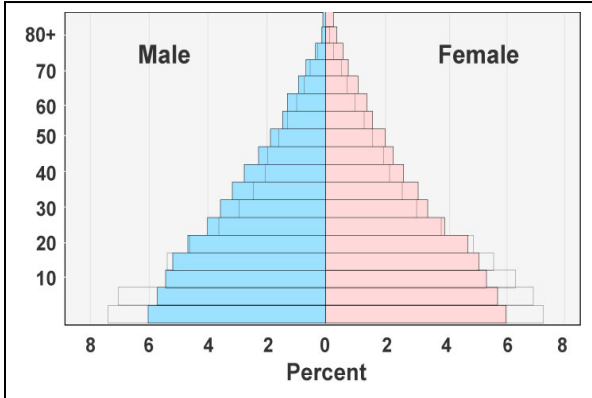
NCVH, with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, commissioned Drs. Buhrmann and Hodge, clinician/epidemiologists at the University of Ottawa to write a comprehensive, evidence-based background document which would focus on information relevant to building a framework for action for vision health They produced “**Foundations for a Canadian Vision Health Strategy**”. This document together with “**Synthesis of Responses to a Pre-Workshop Consultation**”, a document previously reviewed and commented upon by members of the vision community and drawn freely from the Australian Vision Plan Framework, were used to kick-start the discussions.

Support for the concept of a National Vision Plan was unanimous. Participants agreed that the plan should be comprehensive, cohesive, coordinated and inclusive containing action areas that would have the potential to lead to the prevention of avoidable blindness. Components of such a plan would include (1) **reducing the risk of eye disease and eye injury** through health promotion and raising public awareness (2) **increasing early detection of disease** through public and professional education and the development of early detection protocols (3) **improving access** to eye health and rehabilitation services (4) **promoting excellence in vision health outcomes** (5) **expanding and improving the knowledge base** through research, surveillance and knowledge translation. The recommendations of the workshop participants are contained in the “**Workshop Report**”.

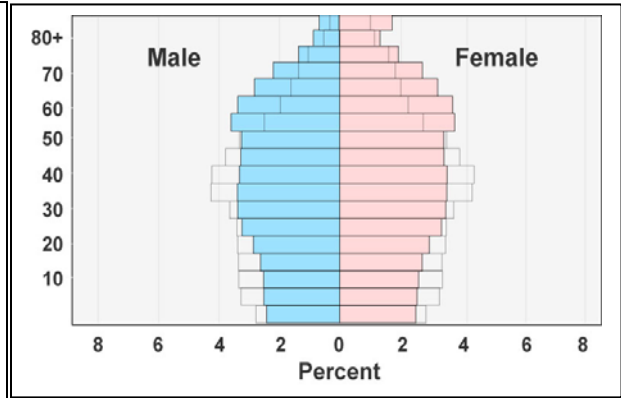
**“Eye-Opening” Workshop Statistics.**

**Canada’s Aging Population:**

**Population Pyramid Canada 1901**

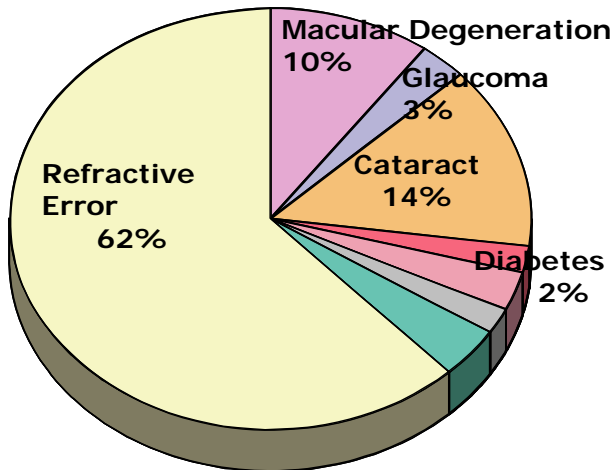


**Population Pyramid Canada 2021**

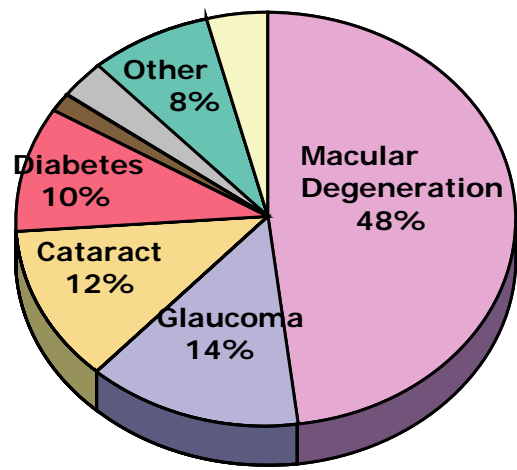


**Age-Related Vision Loss:**

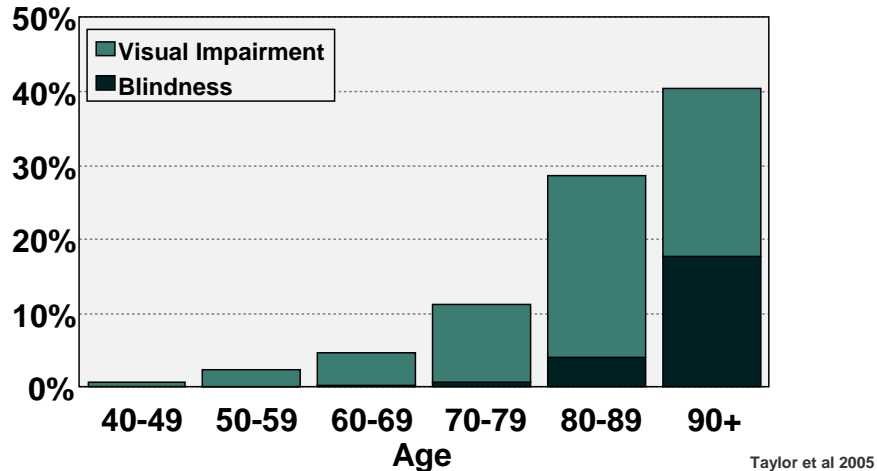
**Vision Impairment**  
Vision 20/50 to 20/200



**Blindness**  
Vision less than 20/200



## Aging and Vision Loss



**1 in 3 Canadians over age 75 has a visual disability.**

### How Patients View Vision Loss:

Vision loss is the most feared disability (Environics Poll, 2003).

Blindness and cancer are the two most feared health conditions  
33% fear blindness – 33% fear cancer – 33% fear something else.

### Vision Impairment Prevents Healthy and Independent Aging:

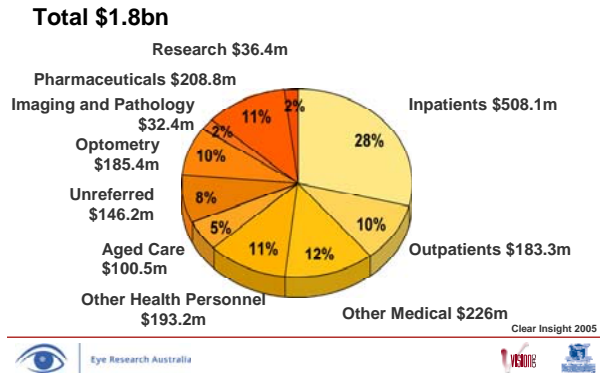
- Doubles the **difficulties of daily living**.
- **Nursing home admissions** occur 3 years earlier.
- Doubles **social dependence**.
- Doubles the risks of **falls**.
- Triples the risk of **depression**.
- Quadruples the risk of **hip fractures**.
- Doubles **mortality rate**.

**2 out of 3 Canadians will lose vision before they die.**

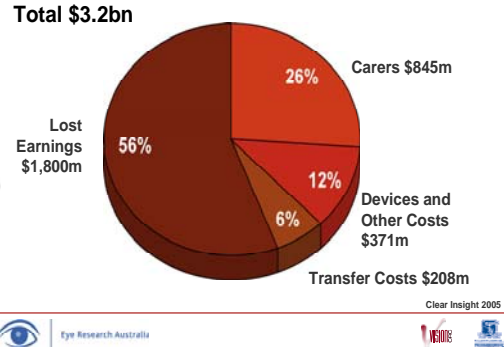
# The Burden of Disease:

The following data is from Australia:

## Direct Health Costs, 2004



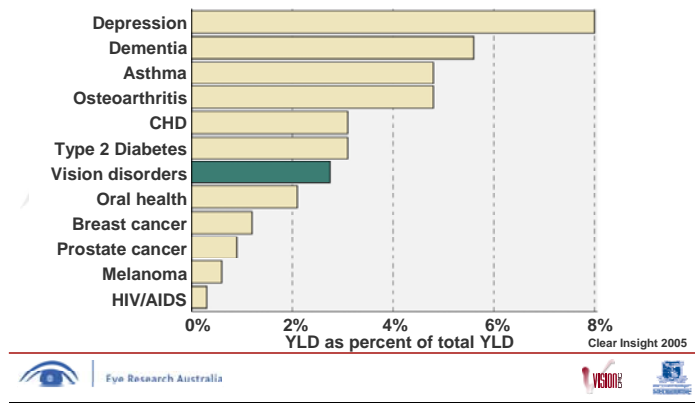
## Indirect Costs, 2004



**Canadian health costs** (assuming Canada's population is 1.6X that of Australia and \$AU and \$CDN are on purchasing parity).

Direct Health Costs	\$2.88 billion CDN
Indirect Health Costs	\$5.12 billion CDN
<b>Total Cost of Vision Disorders</b> (includes Loss of Well Being)	<b>\$15.76 Billion CDN</b>

## Years of Life Lost to Disability (YLD)



## **Moving Our Agenda Forward:**

Given the dramatic increase in the prevalence of age-related eye diseases and avoidable vision loss that will occur in the coming years it is imperative that Canada have an action plan in place allowing for appropriate strategy changes and health care system modifications to effectively meet the future vision needs of all Canadians.

Canada needs a framework for a nationally coordinated plan of action for vision health involving governments (Federal, Provincial and Territorial), health professionals, vision researchers, academics, non-government organizations and vision stakeholders). As a first step the National Coalition for Vision Health is asking the Federal Government to **endorse the creation of a Vision Plan for Canada**. We are cognizant of the jurisdictional issues involved and that that creation and implementation of such a plan would require the consent and cooperation of the Provinces and Territories. We are asking the Federal Government to play a lead role in this Pan-Canadian initiative. What we require are **dedicated human resources and financial assistance to be allocated for a Vision Hub (Vision Initiative, or Vision Program)**. The Hub could be housed within one of the member associations of the National Coalition for Vision Health. Funding can come directly from government or from outside government in the form of a grant. All Federal Government vision initiatives could then be centralized within the Vision Hub. The workforce, in partnership with NCVH, would draw up a business plan, do Provincial scans, arrange meeting with Provincial and Territorial representatives with a view to obtaining the input and support necessary for achieving a Vision Plan for Canada.

To date representatives of the National Coalition for Vision Health have met with **Mr. Steven Fletcher**, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, **Mr. Ken Bednarek**, previously a Policy Advisor, MOH, **Mr. Ian Clark**, Departmental Assistant, MOH, **Ms. Kim Elmslie**, Director General, PHAC, **Mr. Tim Hutchinson**, Director, Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, PHAC, and **Ms. Barbara Foster**, CCDPC, PHAC, present and past members of the Standing Committee on Health (**Joy Smith**, **Robert Thibault**, **Carolyn Bennett**, **Susan Kadis**, **Christiane Gagnon** and **Bonnie Brown**), **Sabrina Anzini**, Policy Advisor, Social Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister and **Laurie Throness**, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister of Health. All responses have been positive.

A **Vision Plan for Canada** has the potential for **improving the quality of life of all Canadians.**

A **Vision Plan for Canada** enables this Government to **fulfill one of its strategic priorities**, that of developing, enhancing and implementing strategies and programs to promote health and prevent and control chronic disease and injury.

A **Vision Plan for Canada** would enable this Government to **fulfill its international obligation** to the World Health Organization's global initiative "**Vision 2020: The Right To Sight**". Canada voted in support of the Vision 2020: The Right To Sight resolution at the 2003 World Health Assembly in Geneva. The resolution engages all governments to join the fight against avoidable blindness by developing and implementing VISION 2020 National Plans by the year 2007. Australia has developed and implemented a National Vision Plan. Canada has the opportunity to play a leadership role.

The National Coalition for Vision Health,  
January, 2008