



ACT NOW **ACT TOGETHER**

Thursday, October 9, 2025

1:00	Opening Remarks	Leslie Yee
1:10	Welcome Message	Jim Tokos
1:15	National Strategy for Eye Care Act Update	François Couillard
1:30	Canada Eyecare Report 2025 (Specsavers)	Dr. Hiba Mannan
2:00	A Clear Start	Andrew Galster
2:20	Refreshment Break/Lunch	
3:00	Innovative Therapies in Vision Science: Advances, Challenges and Opportunities	Dr. Larissa Moniz
3:30	Mental Health Matters, Act Now!	Melanie Marsden, MSW
4:00	Closing remarks	Leslie Yee
4:10-5:00	Networking	



Detailed Program



National Strategy for Eye Care Act Update

François Couillard, CEO of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO), will provide an update on the National Strategy for Eye Care Act from his perspective, highlighting the work being done through the Vision Health Partners advocacy group.

Canada Eyecare Report 2025

Dr. Hiba Mannan, Head of Professional Services at Specsavers Canada, will present key insights from the newly released Canada Eyecare Report 2025. Based on a national survey commissioned by Specsavers, the report examines critical issues surrounding access to eye care across the country. In this engaging talk, Dr. Mannan will delve into Canada's eye care awareness gap, explore the barriers preventing Canadians from accessing care, and highlight the populations most at risk.

A Clear Start

Andrew Galster is the Executive Director at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) in Ontario. In this talk, Andrew will discuss the importance of early childhood eye exams. This session will highlight the medical urgency of diagnosing treatable conditions early, the link between vision and long-term educational and employment outcomes, and offer a practical roadmap to improve uptake through health and education systems.

Innovative Therapies in Vision Science: Advances, Challenges, and Opportunities

Dr. Larissa Moniz, Director of Research and Mission Programs at Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC), will explore some of the most promising innovative therapies for treating blinding eye diseases, including gene therapy, cell replacement therapy, optogenetics, and retinal prostheses. Dr. Moniz will review the potential for treating conditions like inherited retinal diseases and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The talk will also examine the broader ecosystem challenges that shape their future, including regulation, long-term safety, cost, and access.

Mental Health Matters, Act Now!

Drawing on her lived experience as an Indigenous blind woman and her over 20 years as a social worker, Melanie will share her journey of resilience, the power of technology, and the importance of collaboration in breaking down barriers and improving mental health.

This conference has been sponsored by:

