

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

**As 2012 World Sight Day approaches, VISION 2020 Canada addresses “The state of our vision, at home and abroad.”**

**Ottawa, Ontario** - On Tuesday, October 2, John Rafferty, Chair, VISION 2020 Canada will comment on the state of our vision, at home and abroad and invite MPs, Senators and Ambassadors to actively participate with VISION 2020 Canada to draft a national vision health plan. Rafferty will also highlight the need to raise awareness for the impact of vision loss in Canada, and the prevention of avoidable sight loss, both here at home and around the globe.

All Members of Parliament, the Senate and Ambassadors are invited to attend and contribute. Currently, VISION 2020 Canada members are developing a series of compelling impact reports necessary to lay the foundation for a draft national vision plan for Canada. They represent Canada’s leaders in the eye health community including ophthalmology, optometry, rehabilitation, research who share a commitment to blindness prevention. The plan will address:

1. Access to approved treatments
2. Access to rehabilitation services
3. Public Education and Awareness
4. Research
5. Support for international blindness prevention efforts

Rafferty will invite attendees’ participation in the creation of this plan. “The socio-economic impact of vision loss is far reaching and affects every community and constituent in Canada,” says Rafferty. With Canada’s rapidly aging population, the rate of vision loss is rising just as fast, and so are the costs associated with it. Already, vision loss costs our economy $15.8 billion per year, and researchers estimate that more than one million Canadians are living with blindness or partial sight.

In 2003, in recognition of the growing worldwide vision loss crisis, Canada made a commitment to the World Health Organization to develop and implement a vision health plan by 2005. To date, no such plan exists, but Rafferty is optimistic.

**About World Sight Day**World Sight Day is an international day of awareness, held annually on the second Thursday of October, to focus attention on the global issue of avoidable blindness and visual impairment.

**About VISION 2020 Canada**VISION 2020 Canada is part of VISION 2020, the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, a joint program of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) with an international membership of NGOs, professional associations, eye care institutions and corporations.

[www.**vision2020canada**.ca](http://www.vision2020canada.ca)

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**Interviews available:**

John Rafferty Chair of Vision2020 Canada, President and CEO CNIB

Date/Time: Tuesday, October 2, 2012 (in advance of the Event)

**Contact:** Jennifer Salo

Phone: 416-486-2500 ext. 7570