

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Promoting and Delivering School Based Vision Testing in Selected Toronto High Needs Schools

Moved by: Councillor Pasternak

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Seconded by: Councillor Cheng

#### SUMMARY:

Although Toronto Public Health promotes eye examinations, it does not offer school-based eye examinations based on the dental model. Studies have shown that students with visual impairments have limited ability to learn incidentally. This affects how they form concepts and develop schema or frameworks for understanding new ideas and vocabulary that provide essential foundation skills for comprehension and abstract reasoning. Visual processing directly impacts one's ability to learn, read, and retain information. Learning in school is typically directed at visual processing 75% of the time. So, to do well in school and in life, developing one's visual system is critical. Educational studies and epidemiological results have documented the high prevalence of poor vision among school-age students because of exposure to prolonged vision-demanding academic tasks and prolonged indoor sedentary lifestyles. Megan Collins, a pediatric ophthalmologist at the Wilmer Eye Institute, associate faculty at the Berman Institute of Bioethics, and co-director of the Johns Hopkins Consortium for School-Based Health Solutions concluded in one study that "giving kids the glasses they need helps them succeed in school. This collaborative project with Johns Hopkins, Baltimore City and its partners has major implications for advancing health and educational equity all across the country." Toronto Public Health has noted, "Each year, thousands of children start school without ever having an eye exam. Parents often believe that their child will let them know that they cannot see well, but children are rarely able to tell that they have poor vision because they have nothing to compare it to. That's why we recommend that all children have their first eye exam at 6 months old, again at 2-3 years old, and every year after that." As many do not take this advice, it is recommended that Toronto Public Health explore the viability of co-ordinating school-based eye examinations for elementary students in high needs areas at the start of the school year.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City Council request the Board of Health to consider developing a road map to provide a pilot school-based mobile eye testing program on an opt in basis to school-age children to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to excel in the classroom by the first quarter of 2026.

October 8, 2025