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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Legislation to Ban Eyeball Tattoos and Jewellery**

**Winnipeg, MB:** The Manitoba Association of Optometrists (MAO) and the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (EPSOM) are pleased to announce that a Bill to prohibit the dangerous and sight-threatening practice of scleral tattooing and eye jewellery insertion has passed first reading in the Manitoba Legislature.

Scott Johnston, MLA for St. James, introduced a private member's bill on May 23, 2019. The legislation is titled "The Public Health Amendment Act (Banning Cosmetic Eye Tattooing and Eye Jewellery). The Bill's short description states: "This Bill amends the Public Health Act to ban cosmetic eye tattooing and the implantation of eye jewellery. The ban does not apply to health professionals who comply with their profession's requirements."

The potential for serious complications from this procedure gained international attention in 2017 when a young woman from Ottawa went public with her story. Scleral tattooing of her eye caused significant inflammation and damage to her vision. Another recent case of complications from a scleral tattoo led to removal of a young Alberta man's eye.

The process of scleral tattooing and implantation of eye jewellery involves injecting dye or inserting an object between the conjunctiva and scleral layers of the eye. The thickness of these two layers combined is less than 1 mm, making it a very challenging and risky procedure.

The MAO and EPSOM strongly encourage all parties to work to pass this important health bill before summer, to ensure timely protection of Manitobans' eye health.

The passage of this bill would make Manitoba the second jurisdiction in Canada, after Ontario, to ban these procedures.

#### **References:**

Joint Position Paper, 2018

[https://www.manitobaeyephysicians.ca/wcm-docs/docs/joint\\_position\\_paper\\_scleral\\_tattoos\\_2019\\_wh.pdf](https://www.manitobaeyephysicians.ca/wcm-docs/docs/joint_position_paper_scleral_tattoos_2019_wh.pdf)

*The joint position statement by the EPSOM and MAO has also been endorsed by our national counterparts, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) and the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO).*

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