



Smashing barriers. Driving inclusion. Changing lives.
**CNIB's Advocacy, Accessibility
and Accommodations
Programs**

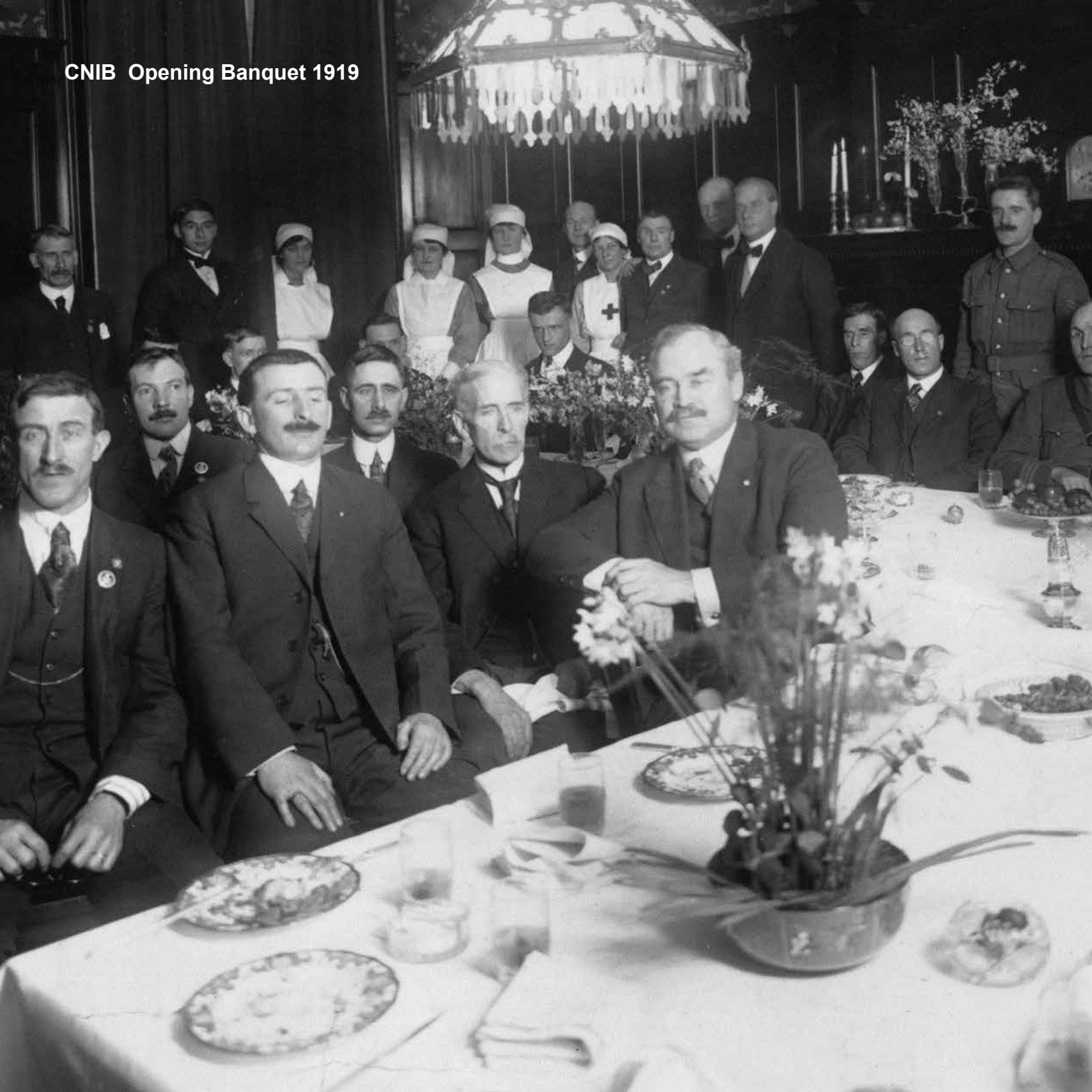
100
years

cnib
a century of change

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CNIB Opening Banquet 1919



Born Out of Advocacy

100 Years Ago

Since 1918, CNIB has worked at the forefront in communities across Canada – helping thousands of blind and partially sighted Canadians build the skills needed to lead full, independent lives.

What started as a few CNIB offices 100 years ago has grown into a nationwide presence – volunteers and staff working together **to transform lives and create inclusive, accessible environments for people who are blind or partially sighted.**

These accomplishments would not have been possible without your support and today we thank you – our many partners and champions across Canada – as we enter our next 100 years with **a bold new ambition to change what it is to be blind today.**

Today, more than two million Canadians are living with a sight-threatening eye disease (age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma) and are at serious risk of losing their sight.

CNIB has 100 years of history serving blind and partially sighted Canadians and can help to meet these challenges and ensure Canadians with sight loss have the support they need to live connected, rewarding and independent lives – **but only with your support.**

Over the next 20 years the prevalence of sight loss across the country is projected to hit an all-time high – increasing by nearly 30 per cent, as our population ages and rates of diabetes and obesity continue to rise.



Changing What It Is to Be Blind

CNIB has a bold new vision moving forward, enabling us to lay the groundwork for innovative quality-of-life programs and services, developed in consultation with thousands of our clients, volunteers and staff.

The key themes arising from the consultations shaped the design of our Advocacy, Accessibility and Accommodations Programs. The programs were developed to address the barriers to participation and inclusivity including access to employment, education, transportation, health care services, the physical environment, and technology.

**Through CNIB's
robust and
wide-reaching
Advocacy,
Accessibility and
Accommodations
Programs, people
who are blind or
partially sighted
can thrive through
a strong voice;
removing stigma
to pave the way
for a world with
no barriers.**



Advocacy: Smashing Barriers to Inclusion

People living with sight loss can do anything their sighted peers can do – just in a different way. It's important that we ask ourselves what role can we play by speaking up, whether individually or as part of a group, to change perceptions of people with sight loss. This is how **we will change what it is to be blind today**.

The CNIB Advocacy Program provides training in advocacy skills for people who want to either self-advocate, raise awareness, or join in a collective effort to challenge systemic discrimination and break down societal barriers.

Through CNIB's unique and targeted advocacy efforts, we will combat the difficult realities faced by people who are blind or partially sighted. We are taking a strong, proactive and collaborative approach to providing the knowledge, skills and leadership opportunities they need to be successful.

The Advocacy Program provides inclusion training to educators, government officials, schools and community partners to support the full integration of people with sight loss in all aspects of society. The program will also offer advocates an inclusive support network and the opportunity to share practical resources and strategies to help people overcome barriers to accessibility.

◀ Victoria Nolan, Head, Stakeholder Relations and Community Engagement, CNIB Guide Dog Program, speaker and advocate

- **Only 65% of youth with sight loss graduate from high school**, compared to 81% of their sighted peers.
- **51% of high school graduates and 29% of university graduates with sight loss live on incomes below the poverty line.**
- **12% of blind or partially sighted students graduate with a post-secondary degree**, compared with more than 20% of sighted students.



Creating an Accessible and Inclusive Society

CNIB's key Advocacy Program priorities are:

- **Providing self-advocacy skills training**, ensuring those with sight loss are empowered to advocate for accommodations in the workplace, public spaces and businesses.
- **Increasing awareness and public education** on the challenges facing people with sight loss, their rights, their unlimited potential and the value they can add to society.
- **Working with business, architects, engineers, designers and planners of the built environment** from the outset to advocate for accessible buildings, sidewalks and pathways to ensure they are accessible and inclusive of people who are blind or partially sighted.
- **Addressing municipal issues (such as accessible public transit, way finding installation of accessible pedestrian signals)** as well as provincial, national and international issues including the right to independently cast and verify a ballot in confidence; the right to be accompanied by a guide dog in public places or on commercial aircraft, buses, taxis and ferries; and access to alternate format reading materials and documents - both in hard copy and online.

In our next century, CNIB will systematically unite the Canadian advocate community, smash barriers and create an accessible and inclusive society as a model for the world.

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Advocacy Activities and Efforts:

- **Volunteer advocates presenting to community groups**, families and businesses to share their experiences regarding barriers and exclusion;
- **Peer support groups** to connect kids through tutoring, reading buddies and technology training;
- **Info nights** on topics such as eye conditions, sports and recreation, community programs and local support services available;
- **Support via telephone** and presentations on site, in schools or online addressing sight loss issues;
- **Web-based page links and information** connecting people with community programs, support groups and resources.

“Advocacy is important to me because it drives positive change by allowing people’s abilities - not their disabilities - to take centre stage.”

- Greg Thompson, CNIB client, volunteer Ambassador and advocate



Accessibility: Smashing Barriers to Inclusion

Due to misconceptions, lack of understanding and stigma associated with people with sight loss, many are excluded from the social, academic and economic opportunities that their sighted peers enjoy.

Sight loss at any age can be a frightening and challenging experience as even simple daily activities can become difficult - and at times may seem impossible. This is particularly true for children dealing with progressive sight loss during these vulnerable years.

Unfortunately, these challenges far too often lead to social isolation, academic failure/school dropout and loss of optimism about their prospects. Serious consequences can follow, such as depression and other mental health issues, as well as limited access to gainful and meaningful employment.

There's a general lack of awareness on the part of employers, many educators and often people who are blind or partially sighted themselves, of the basic accommodations in schools and the workplace, as well as the volunteer opportunities, internships, skills training and career support programs that are available to them. This lack of knowledge contributes to the fact that **65 per cent of working-age adults with sight loss are unemployed or live below the poverty line.**

- **In 10 years, the prevalence of sight loss is projected to increase by nearly 30%.**
- **74% of children with sight loss do not play sports.**
- **Only one-third of Canadian working-age adults with sight loss are employed.**

Educate and Include for Change

CNIB staff, volunteer advocates and ambassadors work with technology providers to ensure accessibility is embedded in off-the-shelf products. We are ensuring that employers and industries are compliant with the new and existing laws in some provinces relative to working with people who have disabilities and are familiar with the simple accommodations required for compliance.

CNIB staff and volunteers participate in and lead workshops and information sessions for governments, public transit personnel and businesses on accessibility issues and challenges, current assistive technologies, navigation apps and websites. Our staff actively participate on government advisory committees, to ensure the unique challenges facing blind Canadians are not overlooked when policies and programs are developed. We also offer technology training and host tech fairs geared to showcase accessible products.

Our efforts in manmade surroundings such as buildings, sidewalks, public parks and public transportation address physical access issues encountered by blind or partially sighted travellers. These solutions include tactile and braille signage, colour contrast, accessible pedestrian signals and unobstructed paths of travel.

Working directly with educators through our Beyond the Classroom program and with businesses through unique initiatives like ShopTalk, CNIB's goal is to make Canada one of the most accessible countries in the world!



‘Shop Talk: BlindSquare Enabled’ is a funded, CNIB accessibility initiative, using BlindSquare technology.

This technology provides a spoken description of a business, including its name, the layout of the space, and the goods or services on display through an app on the user’s iPhone. It

works through a small battery-powered device or ‘beacon’ installed in the doorway of the business. The app also provides users with the names of the roads they are walking along, or where the bus stops are, and it is available in several languages.

The first CNIB ShopTalk initiative is located in central Toronto and is now being expanded across Canada. Using the BlindSquare iPhone navigation app allows people with sight loss to explore their surroundings with independence and confidence.

“I decided to become involved with CNIB ShopTalk because I am a BlindSquare user. Adding the beacons to businesses in the CNIB Community Hub area is a great idea, making the area more accessible for myself and other blind or partially sighted people in the community. They say that knowledge is power, and this new technology gives our community the power to be more independent.” -Denise Chamberlin, BlindSquare user

The recent ‘ShopTalk: BlindSquare Enabled’ initiative is a very successful accessibility project that is a powerful example of what donated funds can achieve – as we **help to change what it is to be blind today.**



Unleashing the Power of Technology

Accessible technology can transform the lives of those who are blind or partially sighted when they learn what will work best for them and how to use it in a safe and encouraging environment. The CNIB accessible technology team provides a vital introduction to new accessible technology options like new smartphone apps and the latest assistive devices for people with varying degrees of sight loss. Our goal is to offer ongoing support to those of all ages in an open and accessible space for learning, sharing, problem-solving and trying out new technologies.

Michael's story: Living with sight loss and trying to learn how to use an iPhone at an older age sounds frustrating and difficult. Nevertheless, 75-year-old Michael was determined to take advantage of his iPhone's accessibility features. He contacted CNIB and learned about a feature called Voiceover. Soon Michael was experimenting with other tasks on his phone and checked back with CNIB for guidance as he went along. Michael says the best thing about these technological advancements is that they, "give a blind person confidence and that CNIB was right by his side and ready to help."

CNIB provides training on accessible technologies including The Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) player, which reads formatted digital files that are designed as an audio substitute for print material, and allows individuals with sight loss to:

- Access books, magazines in an audio format.
- Search text, place bookmarks and navigate text line-by-line.
- Navigate complex documents, including complete text books.

CNIB has Canada's largest DAISY file collection with more than 80,000 titles available to our users. Specialists provide DAISY training and show users how to access CNIB's file collection online through our arms-length organization, CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access). CNIB works with 620 public libraries across Canada through CELA.



Inclusion and Accessibility in Post-Secondary Education

Provincial equity requirements ensure that meaningful participation in post-secondary education is a basic human right. Providing reasonable accommodations in schools and training centres includes: the development of modified, individualized plans within regular course programs; assistive technology; tutoring and note takers; testing and exam accommodations.

One of the main barriers to success in post-secondary education is access to alternative format materials from the outset. Class texts and readings must be made available in accessible PDF format at source for blind or partially sighted students to have access to them. CNIB is working with the Canadian government to ensure that publishers make this happen.

Through accommodations, students with sight loss can more successfully participate in post-secondary education and develop significant job skills in many career areas. However, adequate resources are required to ensure accommodations, supports and staff training are readily available throughout the post-secondary education and training system.

Through our advocacy, accessibility and accommodations efforts, CNIB works alongside post-secondary education institutions across Canada to help ensure that students at all stages of their academic, training and career pursuits receive the support they need for success. Our shared goal is to increase the opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the labour market, and our communities, taking their rightful place as full citizens.

**With your support,
CNIB is working to
ensure accessibility
and lack of
accommodations
are no longer a
barrier to youth
entering and
succeeding in
post-secondary
education.**

Accessible and Inclusive Workplaces

Educating employers on appropriate and legally required accommodations in the workplace will lead individuals with sight loss to successful financial independence through meaningful employment.

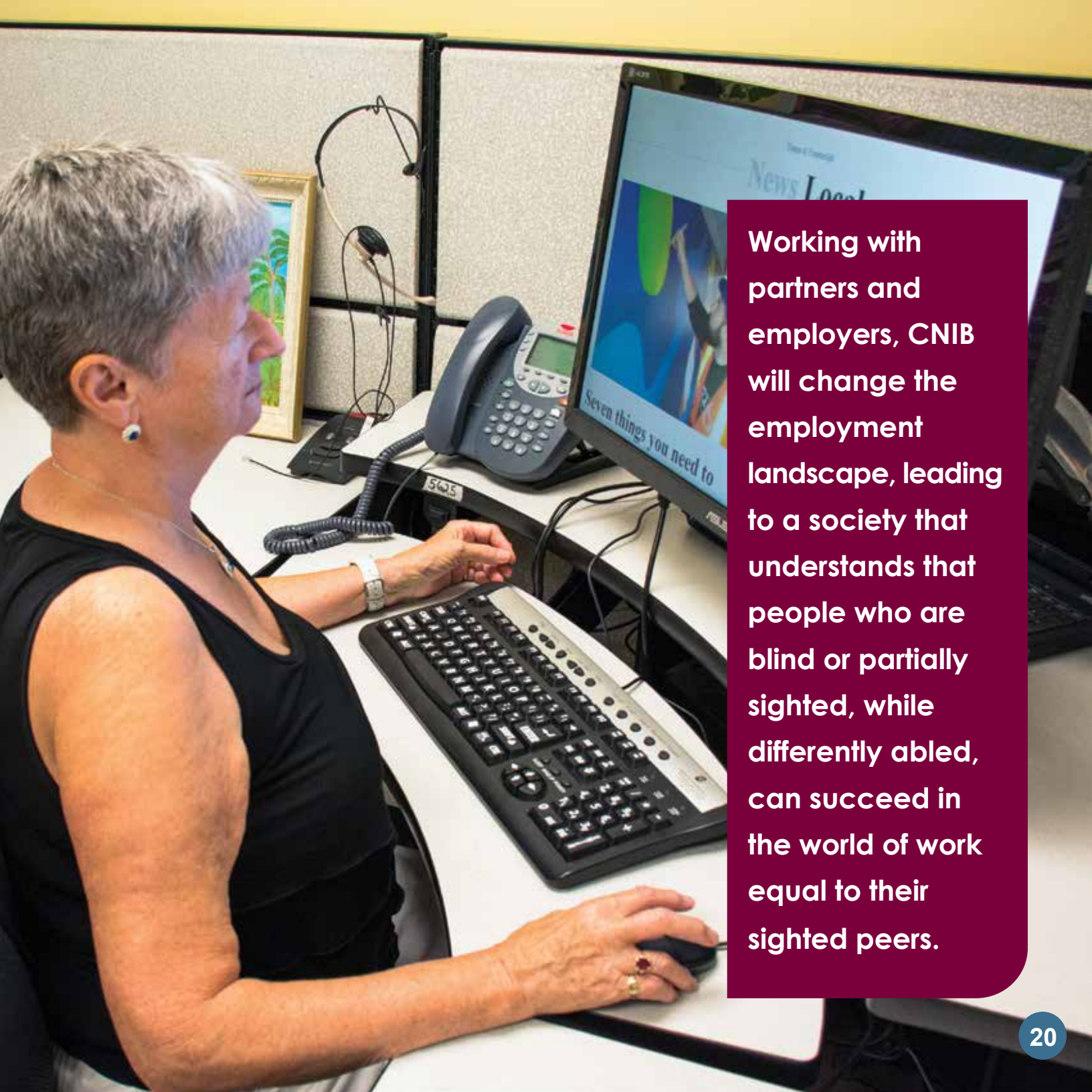
This will fundamentally change what it is like to be blind in the workplace and in doing so, we can maximize the positive impact to the individual and broaden career options, while tackling the much wider issue of significant underemployment and unemployment among people with sight loss.

CNIB will take significant steps to support those entering the workforce. We will approach, advocate, educate and work with an identified network of agencies, industries and institutes that are open to accepting, employing and supporting people with sight loss or blindness.

CNIB's advocacy and accessibility initiatives will help employers integrate affordable and readily available high- and low-tech accommodations into the workplace, that impact confidence and productivity. These basic accommodations include:

- Improved contrast and increased screen magnification
- High-tech text-to-speech output
- Enhanced screen colours
- Devices to enlarge printed documents
- Braille transcribers
- Portable note takers

Help CNIB break down barriers to eliminate the stigma that exists in the workplace. Together, **we can help change what it is to be blind today.**



Working with partners and employers, CNIB will change the employment landscape, leading to a society that understands that people who are blind or partially sighted, while differently abled, can succeed in the world of work equal to their sighted peers.



Ambassadors: Our Voice in the Community

The Ambassador Program is a public speaking and effective communications program that raises awareness of sight loss and the work of CNIB at community events. CNIB provides training to help participants, their loved ones and volunteers develop the presentation skills to confidently represent CNIB in the community.

Our volunteer Ambassadors represent CNIB in schools, seniors' residences, businesses, information booths at community events and fundraising events. CNIB Ambassadors raise awareness on the spectrum of blindness, the programs of CNIB and the serious challenges and accomplishments of people with sight loss.

The Ambassador Program is driven by CNIB program participants and volunteers who are partially sighted or blind. The average Canadian knows very little about sight loss, even though they probably know someone who has experienced it. **Building awareness and understanding will change what it is to be blind today.**



“I am an Ambassador and advocate for CNIB. I love my role because it gives me an opportunity to educate our society about vision loss, along with giving me an opportunity to tell others how I deal with vision loss, and how they can also accommodate someone like me so that they know I can also be an asset to them. It’s a great opportunity for me to create a powerful and positive change in society.”

-Shahzadi Khan, Ambassador and advocate, CNIB, Mississauga

Stronger Together!

Through the Advocacy, Accessibility and Accommodations Programs, CNIB aims to promote systemic change in societal attitudes, policies and practices towards people with sight loss through activities that build self-advocacy skills on issues such as equal access to education, employment, transportation and public spaces.

There is so much to be done to create the inclusive society we envision, where accommodation is available to all who need it and is the norm. We are stronger together, and by speaking up as part of a group we will change what it is to be blind today.

Our vision for the Advocacy, Accessibility and Accommodations Programs:

- **Aid in achieving the best education experience possible** for young Canadians who are blind or partially sighted and their families;
- **Increase confidence**, social skills, opportunity, knowledge, inclusion, independence and sense of empowerment for all;
- **Bridge the opportunity gap** by providing support to all family members invested in the education and empowerment and equal rights;
- **Provide education on sight loss** within schools, libraries, businesses, government and other public forums;
- **Help prepare for life stage transitions** with greater confidence, thereby increasing graduation rates in high school and post-secondary education leading to finding and retaining meaningful employment

CNIB aims to provide this help through online and telephone program delivery to every Canadian who could benefit.



By providing a full spectrum of advocacy and accessibility programs, individuals with common traits such as age, type of disease and stage of sight loss will receive customized guidance and support that is the most meaningful and effective.

- iPad Accessibility
- Voiceover
- Zoom
- Siri



Building Best-in-Class Programs

CNIB is committed to delivering best-in-class, evidence-based programs for Canadians with sight loss. Through an inclusive process of program development and delivery, we strive to make the greatest possible difference in their lives.

Our Advocacy, Accessibility and Accommodations Programs are offered free of charge to all, but the process of developing and delivering them is resource-intensive. In each program area, this ongoing work involves:

- **Consultation and planning:** We review research, collaborate with experts and, most importantly, consult those we serve to gain a robust understanding of their barriers, challenges and needs.
- **Program development:** We work with our in-house experts, volunteer advisors and other leaders in the blindness field to develop innovative programs that respond to participant needs and reflect international best practices.
- **Program implementation:** We recruit and train dynamic staff and volunteer leaders to roll out programs in selected locations across the province. As programs are launched and piloted, we seek to optimize all aspects of delivery and marketing and improve participant experiences.
- **Impact reporting and expansion:** We routinely monitor program effectiveness to ensure participants have the best possible outcomes and reach their individual goals. We use the data we gather to continually evolve and expand our programs, and identify emerging needs for the future.



Measuring Success

When it comes to helping Canadians cope with the challenges of sight loss, success is our only option. That is why it's vital that each of our innovative Advocacy, Accessibility and Accommodations Programs leads to proven, positive outcomes in the lives of those we serve.

As the largest organization in Canada serving people who are blind or partially sighted, CNIB will become stronger in our advocacy efforts across the country. Through our efforts, we will move the needle in a significant way in many areas, including:

- **Public awareness:** Guide dog users are still commonly denied access to services or public facilities often due to a lack of awareness or understanding of the provincial and national accessibility laws. Our goal is to ensure this no longer happens.
- **Employment:** Advocacy efforts will ensure business and industry acknowledges and accepts responsibility for providing fully accessible, safe and inclusive workplaces.
- **Technology:** We work closely with technology companies to offer fully accessible solutions for their off-the-shelf products and ensure schools and employers provide the accessible technology required.
- **Inclusivity:** Through advocacy efforts in partnership with education systems, we will increase the low participation rates in sports and recreation activities.
- **Education:** CNIB will help improve low graduation rates by placing more CNIB volunteer Ambassadors in classrooms and working with students, their families and educators to increase awareness of the available resources.

CNIB is committed to measuring and maximizing the impact of each of our programs.

We examine the impact of our programs from a range of perspectives and indicators, including uptake and demand numbers, participant outcomes and stakeholder experiences. Using a variety of recognized evaluation tools, we can determine where there are opportunities to improve, enhance and expand these innovative programs.

We Need Your Support!

CNIB is celebrating its centenary in 2018, and we are excited to unveil a new path for the future; one that sees us working in partnership with those who we serve, as well as provincial governments, businesses, educators, school boards, the medical community, volunteers and supporters, to create a future in which every Canadian can fully participate in life – regardless of sight loss.

CNIB is levelling the playing field for Canadians with sight loss by developing life-changing programs, imparting vital knowledge, enabling people to lead fuller, more independent lives, demanding societal reform and inspiring change. **But we cannot do it alone.**

It is critical that we work together to ensure that these programs are successful. **We can only accomplish this with your support.**

- **A gift of \$4,000** places BlindSquare beacons in **200 businesses**, which will benefit thousands of people and businesses across the country, and **\$2,500** uploads the BlindSquare App to **40 cellphones** of blind or partially sighted BlindSquare users.
- **A gift of \$5,000** will create an interactive **awareness-raising information video series** to train advocates – people with sight loss, their friends and family – to confidently self-advocate.

Please consider making a donation to support our Advocacy, Accessibility and Accommodations Programs across Canada. Your gift will change lives and empower people who are blind or partially sighted to achieve their goals and reach their highest potential.

Join us today!

To Make a Donation or Learn More:

Phone: 1-800-563-2642

Web: cnib.ca



Contact Information:

Charitable registration # :119219459 RR0003

CNIB Mission

To change what it is to be blind through innovative programs and powerful advocacy that enable Canadians impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose.

About CNIB

Celebrating 100 years in 2018, the CNIB Foundation is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Our work as a blind foundation is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast.

