

“Skyler was so excited to get his Readasaurus kit in the mail today that he didn’t even want to take off his jacket before checking it out. Skyler wants me to say, ‘Thank you for all the cool Braille stuff!’ ”

-Brittany, mother of Skyler, 7

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**Bring the gift of words to Canadians  
with vision loss, young and old**



CNIB LIBRARY - 1975



# The critical importance of reading

Canada is facing a growing vision health crisis, and it touches every one of us. More than half a million Canadians currently live with one of the four major eye diseases—glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy or age-related macular degeneration (AMD)—and are at serious risk of losing their sight in the future. Over the next decade, the prevalence of vision loss in Canada is expected to increase by nearly 30 per cent.

One of the daily human activities affected most profoundly by vision loss—reading—is absolutely critical to the success of a person who is blind or partially sighted living in a sighted world. Early childhood literacy, education and access to books and other printed materials have an impact on a person’s commitment to education, ability to work and level of personal satisfaction in life.

Since its inception in 1918, CNIB has built a library of close to 100,000 books, magazines, films and newspapers in alternative formats such as audio, braille and electronic text—enabling access to the world of information and entertainment enjoyed by sighted Canadians. For many Canadians with vision loss, this has been the primary service of CNIB for many years.

**Today, we are asking for your support to meet these challenges and bring the gift of reading to children and adults with vision loss across the country.**





# Paving the way for equal access to books

In 2014, a giant leap forward was made to ensure equitable access to library services for all Canadians who cannot read traditional print materials due to a visual, physical or learning disability (such as dyslexia). A new not-for-profit organization, the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), was founded to provide access to alternative format materials—including CNIB’s collection—through local public libraries. CNIB played a major role in making this happen and now supports CELA to ensure that Canadians with vision loss continue to receive the services they have come to love and rely on.

**This is a huge step forward for accessibility. But we need your help for our clients to be able to take it.**

A benefit of CELA is access to Bookshare, one of the world’s largest online collections for people with print disabilities. Its 225,000 ebooks include new bestsellers and educational materials. Ebooks have the advantage of being quick to produce and enhance the reading experience by providing the full text of a book, which can be highly magnified or read aloud with computer-generated speech. Currently, almost 200,000 people in Ontario are living with vision loss, but only 500 have access to Bookshare through CELA. We need your help to increase the number of free subscriptions CELA can make available and to ensure that all Ontarians with vision loss who can benefit from the service are able to access it.

**Please help support Ontarians who are blind or partially sighted with an investment in Bookshare. With your support, CNIB will invest \$150,000 over the next 3 years to provide 3,000 subscriptions to Bookshare across Ontario.**

**More than  
3 million  
Canadians  
have a print  
disability of  
some kind.**



# Bringing new technology to people with vision loss

CNIB has changed with the times, offering new digital formats and the ability to download materials to computers, tablets and specialized audio book readers. However, a great many of our Ontario clients still receive audio books on CD by mail. They have to wait several days to weeks to receive a CD. In 2013, CNIB launched a new service called “Direct to Player”. The service lets readers get books faster—within minutes. It’s attractive to younger people because it works with the latest smartphones and tablets, but it also serves older people because it works with audio book readers that are specially designed for use with low or no vision, severe arthritis, and hearing loss. Moreover, the devices are wifi-enabled, so no computer is required!

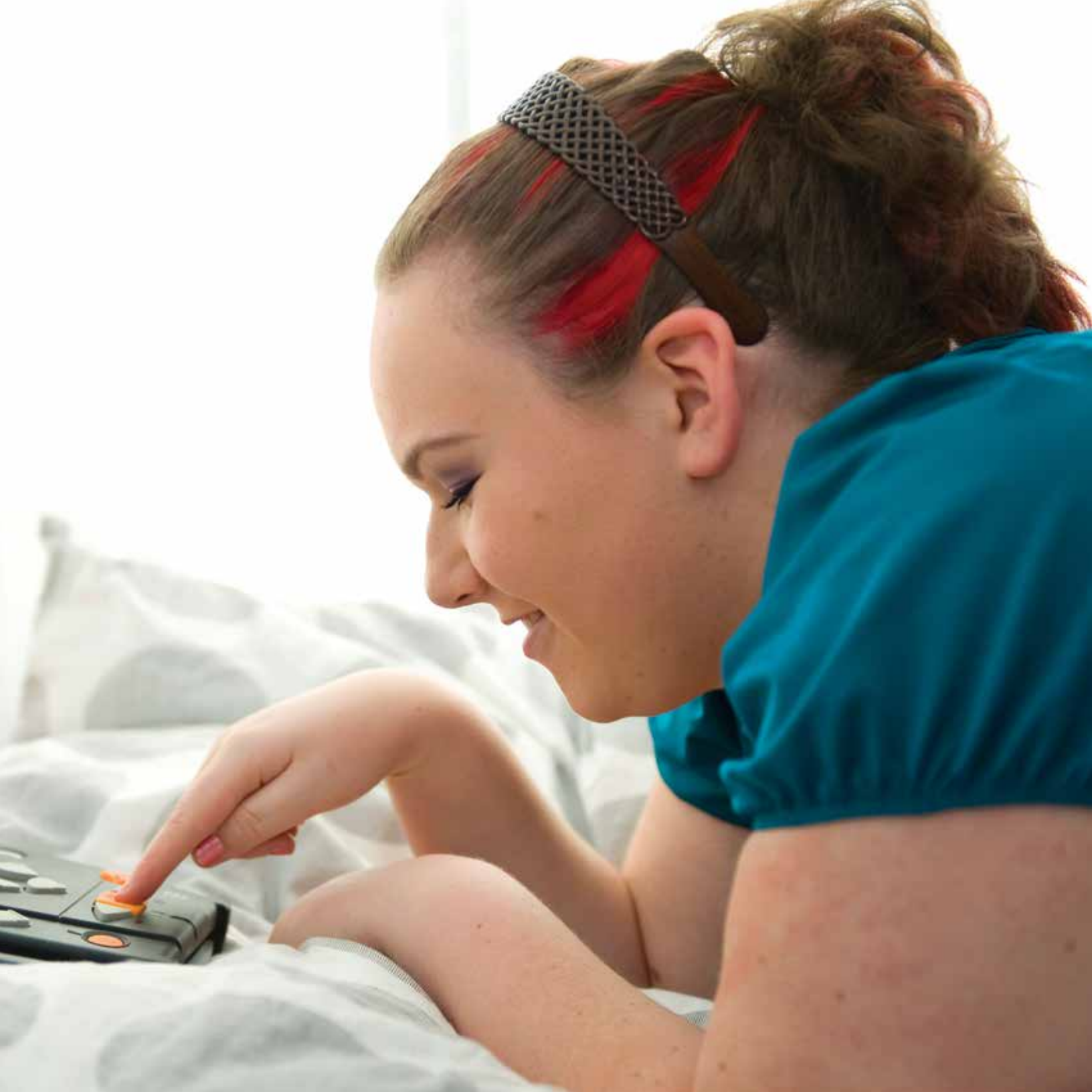
Direct to Player service also costs substantially less to provide—sending an audio book on CD costs CNIB about \$1.50, whereas downloading costs less than 10 cents. CD technology is also at the end of its life cycle and supply and equipment costs are rising.

However, with many adults with vision loss living on less than \$20,000 a year, even the cost of an Internet connection and a new audio book reader is a luxury.

**Please help us enable Ontarians with vision loss to take advantage of this new Direct to Player service. With your support, we will invest \$600,000 over the next 3 years to transition 1,000 Ontario clients still using CDs to downloading over high-speed Internet.**

**Half of working-age Canadians with vision loss struggle to make ends meet on \$20,000 per year or less.**





## Bringing new technology to people with vision loss

The impact of your support is in the daily difference you can make in the lives of CNIB clients. Imagine being able to read the latest bestseller at the same time as your friend who recommended it—something that was previously beyond your reach. Or no longer having to wait weeks for your book to arrive in the mail. We will give Ontarians with vision loss the access that is only made possible by CNIB's initiative with CELA, by new technologies, and by your generous support.

**Adults with vision loss are at least 90% more likely to suffer from depression.**



## Early literacy for children: Words to see, touch and hear

Because children with vision loss can't rely on visual cues to connect objects to their meaning—an important step in early literacy development—parents and caregivers must learn to teach them differently, with the help of materials, skills and ideas for implementing emergent literacy programs in their homes. The Readasaurus literacy kit was developed in 2014 to do just this. Developed with the input of specialists, teachers and parents, the kit explains why reading is important, and provides information on format options, how to pick books or make your own, and how to introduce reading to children with vision loss in everyday settings. These are vital tools for parents to understand and support their child's learning and literacy development.

### Each kit contains:

- A Family Guide explaining the importance of literacy to success in life and the different ways a child with vision loss can read
- Three audio books on CD
- An activity book with tips, tactile exercises and ideas for games that teach skills in listening, touch, movement and comprehension
- Activity materials, including tactile stickers, Wikki Stix, a braille ruler and magnifier—and inspiration for creating your own
- Door hanger and glow-in-the dark braille wrist bands to remind families and kids that literacy is a part of everyday life

**Please help us distribute Readasaurus Kits to families with a pre-school age child who is experiencing vision loss. With your support, CNIB will invest \$30,000 over the next 3 years to bring Readasaurus Kits to 500 new client families.**

**In Ontario,  
there are over  
6,000 children  
who are blind  
or partially  
sighted, and  
approximately  
120 new  
diagnoses  
are made  
each year.**





## We need your support

Your support will have a tremendous impact on children who are diagnosed with vision loss. You can help these children and their families by instilling a love of reading at an early age, and by giving parents the crucial tools and exercises they need to support their child. Reading can and should be a central part of the lives of children who are blind or partially sighted, just as it is for a sighted child. With your help, CNIB can give them the building blocks they need for success, enjoyment and independence in a sighted world.

Please help us make the gift of literacy to a child who is blind. With your gift, you will join the thousands of Canadians who help fund CNIB's many national initiatives for the vision loss community.

**With these and other programs, working together across the country, CNIB will:**

**Ensure** No Canadian experiences preventable vision loss. We will intervene early so that those who do have vision loss can learn strategies to improve their everyday lives.

**Empower** Canadians living with blindness and partial sight to live independently and achieve their full potential.

**Inspire** Canadians who are blind or partially sighted to raise their voices and ask for change.

Please give generously to the CNIB Library today. Together we will bring the gift of words to Canadians with vision loss, young and old.

**To make your donation, please contact:**

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“I cannot begin to tell you what a difference you are all making in my client’s life. Losing her sight so quickly had her depressed and angry. Hearing her laughing and having her rush to tell me which books arrived in the mail is wonderful to witness. You should all feel very proud of what you do and the daily difference you make in so many lives.”

- Shelley, caregiver to CNIB client, age 91

“I am very pleased that I joined Bookshare. I checked it the first day I heard about Chris Hadfield’s new book, and there it was! I have also downloaded a number of very current technical books that I use in my work.”

-Wendy, CNIB client, 62