# Re-Vision ADP Report – Executive Summary

September 2018

The Government of Ontario should be proud of its Assistive Devices Program (ADP) – it is a lifeline for many Ontarians living with disabilities. Without ADP, many would be unable to afford an assistive device.

In 2017, through public meetings as well as telephone and online surveys, we spoke to more than 4,000 Canadians impacted by blindness. They told us about their experiences, needs, ambitions and what they want from CNIB. In Ontario, we received a clear message: government-funded assistive devices enable individuals with sight loss to lead active, independent lives. Through this process, we met with medical professionals, ADP vendors and authorizers, manufacturers and other disability groups. These consultations highlighted several areas of the ADP that require improvement:

1. Application Process
2. Affordability
3. Inefficiencies
4. Training
5. Inflexible and Outdated Technology

## 1. Application Process

### The Problem

Currently, the paper-based application process is inaccessible and inefficient. At best, applicants wait weeks to hear from ADP, but they often wait months.

**“The authorization process needs to be scrapped as it's inefficient, and not timely. By the time technology is approved, it's outdated.” -Mary, Huntsville**

### The Solution

An online system could make the process accessible and efficient, and significantly improve wait times.

## 2. Affordability

### The Problem

* Applicants who aren't Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients must pay 25 per cent of the costs, including seniors. This presents significant financial challenges for Ontarians with sight loss.
* Given that most ADP-approved vendors are based in urban areas, Ontarians living in rural and remote areas often purchase devices from vendors who aren't approved by ADP and submit a claim. These out-of-pocket expenses place unnecessary financial burdens on individuals.

**“The cost is prohibitive for those who are not on ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) or OW (Ontario Works). I think the ADP should move to a means-tested amount for the out-of-pocket expenses.” –Scott, Etobicoke**

### The Solution

* It's imperative that we investigate other means-testing methods to address the affordability gap for low-income individuals, such as seniors and those who aren't eligible for ODSP or OW.
* By moving to an electronic system, Ontarians in underserviced areas could work with assessors, authorizers and vendors online, and avoid upfront costs for using vendors that aren't approved by ADP.
* The government should consider upfront funding for individuals who wish to purchase their devices from mainstream retailers – these devices are often sold at lower prices, which would result in cost savings for the ADP and empower consumer choice.

## 3. Inefficiencies

### The Problem

* The ADP does not fund repairs for devices, which means individuals often live with broken devices until they're eligible to apply for new equipment.
* The ADP does not fund upgrades for software, which is often cheaper than buying an entirely new version of software.

**“If devices don't work and they break before five years, it disables people – it is deflating." –Tammy, Kingston**

### The Solution

* Rather than having individuals re-purchase equipment or new software, it would be more fiscally responsible and efficient to fund repairs and software upgrades.

## 4. Training

### The Problem

* The number of hours and funding levels for training has not been updated since 1989.
* Ten hours of training is not enough for some individuals, such as those who have multiple disabilities, seniors or people who are new to technology.
* The current program doesn't encourage people to become trainers or go above and beyond the fixed hours.

**"My girls had $10,000 worth of equipment that just sat in the dining room collecting dust for four years. It's just a waste of the government's money." –Fatima, Brampton**

### The Solution

* To ensure individuals receive the required training, the number of training hours should be tailored to individual needs.

## 5. Inflexible and Outdated Technology

### The Problem

* Devices under the visual aids category have not been significantly updated since 2001. Therefore, the manual doesn't include modern technology, and products that haven't been manufactured for years are still covered.

**"The ADP needs to recognize that smartphones are more than just a phone. Access to more portable technology is important, so accessibility is not chained to a desk.” –Larissa, Brantford**

### The Solution

* Audit the current list of ADP-approved devices to ensure it is up-to-date and ensure products in the manual are available to consumers.
* Update the categories of approved devices to include modern technology that can be less expensive and more portable, such as smartphones, tablets, mobile applications and portable magnifiers.

## Our call to action

We're asking the government to meet with all ADP stakeholder groups to discuss how we can work together to revision ADP.

For more information, please read the full consultation report at [LINK] and visit [revisionadp.ca](http://www.revisionadp.ca) to find out how you can get involved.

**Contact**

Kat Clarke

Manager, Advocacy and Government Affairs

CNIB Ontario & Quebec

Kat.Clarke@cnib.ca

T: 416-486-2500 ext. 7651