



Phone It Forward

A CNIB Accessible Technology Program

Donate a smartphone.
Change the life of someone
who's blind



“Technology is all around us and it allows me to be more independent, helping me to do everything in life that so many others do. I use my smartphone for tracking my fitness, controlling my pressure cooker, and using email or twitter. I also use apps on my phone for GPS and scanning text. Technology is a great equalizer for people with sight loss.”

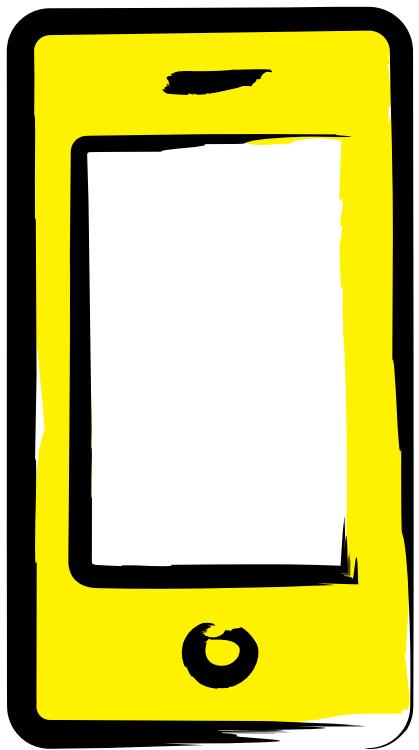
-Diane Bergeron, individual who is blind

Unleashing the power of technology

CNIB is proud to unveil a new path for the future - one that sees us working in partnership with those who we serve, as well as corporations, provincial governments, the medical community, volunteers and supporters, to create a future in which every Canadian has the opportunity to fully participate in life, regardless of sight loss.

One of the ways we're doing that is by **unleashing the power of technology**.

Most people don't realize the tremendous impact technology can have on the present-day life of someone who's blind. From talking watches to GPS tools, computer speech functionality, high-tech magnifiers and even special devices that identify colours, there are now hundreds of exciting technologies on the market that are designed with one purpose in mind: to make life easier and more independent for people with sight loss.



Smartphone apps are revolutionizing everything

'Accessible technology' is a term used to describe any piece of technology with specialized features that help people with disabilities, including sight loss, to fully access the device - and the world.

As we move forward, more and more accessible technologies are being revolutionized in app form - making it easier and more affordable than ever for people to access a large range of helpful tools at the touch of a smartphone.

Today, most smartphones come with a suite of accessible apps already installed, and new apps are being developed at incredible speed for users to download at their own pace. These apps make it possible for people with sight loss to do all kinds of things that may have seemed almost impossible only a few years ago.

Modern smartphones allow blind users to:

- Read prescription labels and take medication safely
- Recognize the faces of loved ones
- Access emergency assistance from sighted volunteers
- Travel safely alone using GPS
- And do countless other day-to-day tasks most of us take for granted

Did you know?

There are hundreds of apps on the market that are designed to make life easier for people with sight loss; most are free or very affordable. Here are some of the most popular:

- **Seeing AI:** Uses artificial intelligence to narrate the world around the user
- **Be My Eyes:** Uses live video calling to connect blind users to sighted volunteers for visual assistance
- **KNFB Reader:** Uses the phone's built-in camera to identify text and read printed items and documents aloud
- **TapTapSee:** Uses the phone's built-in camera to identify objects (e.g., can of soup, etc.) and describe the objects aloud
- **BlindSquare:** Uses GPS and special "Beacon" markers to help users navigate inside public buildings like malls, hospitals and offices as well as outside

Khrisstina's story

After a sudden loss of sight, a smartphone helped her see the beauty in life again

Before she lost her sight, Khrisstina Engel led a very normal life. She enjoyed going out with girlfriends and working part-time as a receptionist for a medical office. Then at age 32, everything changed.

That's when Khrisstina started getting excruciating migraines every day. She would sit in a dark room for hours waiting for the pain to pass. Once a week doctors injected her with nerve blockers - an effort to help dull the pain for the next three or four days.

"I tried everything to relieve the migraines," she says. "I cut out alcohol, went on special diets, acupuncture. Nothing helped."

This torment lasted for years. Then one day, when she was 38 years old, Khrisstina was struck with the worst migraine she'd ever experienced. It was so severe that it caused her to have a stroke... a stroke which left her completely blind.

But despite all she'd been through, she never gave up. She rallied her spirits and came to CNIB for help, determined to rebuild her independence - and her life.

Our specialists showed Khrisstina how to use dozens of different technologies that made a huge difference in her daily life, a modern smartphone being foremost among them. Suddenly, she could pick out her clothes, find her way around town independently, keep up with her friends and current events, and organize her kitchen cupboards - all with the help of her smartphone.

Looking at her now, you'd never know that Khrisstina has only been blind for three years; she has adapted so beautifully. Today she has a full life with many friends, and a loving boyfriend who has also recently lost his sight. Together, they're helping each other learn to overcome the challenges of sight loss - and continue to see the beauty in life.



"When you live in the dark, you can't just pick something up and know what it is,"
says Khrisstina. "Your brain is constantly working to understand the world around you.
Having a smartphone just makes life so much easier."

The need is overwhelming

Despite how life-changing technology can be for blind users, many people with sight loss still don't own a smartphone - at least not one that's advanced enough to help them in their daily lives.

Unfortunately, many people face job loss after they lose their sight. Even for someone who has been blind for years, finding employment can sometimes be an uphill struggle because of workplace barriers and outdated stereotypes about blindness held by employers.

As a result:

- **63%** of adult Canadians with sight loss are not employed.
- Approximately **half** of adult Canadians with sight loss are struggling to make ends meet on \$20,000 a year or less.
- **46%** of adults with sight loss do not own a smartphone or tablet from which they can access the Internet (compared to more than 90% of sighted) and those that do, rarely have the latest models that can support the full suite of accessible apps.

For some people, it's hard enough to make ends meet, let alone purchase the latest device.

A 2017 survey conducted by CNIB found that 97 per cent of those surveyed believe accessible technology is important in allowing them to lead an independent life. At the same time, **70 per cent said the cost of accessible technologies and data plans were a barrier for them to access the technologies they need to thrive.**

Our clients also reported that handheld smart devices are the pieces of technology they most commonly rely on in everyday life. They also strongly endorsed the need to ensure appropriate financial coverage of accessible technologies that promote independence.



"Technology can be expensive, and a lot of people can't work right after they lose their vision. You're just trying to make ends meet, trying to live. I would love to see assistive technologies provided to every blind person who needs them, regardless of price."

Read Khrisstina's story on page 4

CNIB's Accessible Technology Program

In response to the needs uncovered in the 2017 survey, we've identified the need to "Unleash the Power of Technology" as a key goal within our new strategic plan, **Bold Dreams, Bright Futures**.

Through our new Accessible Technology Program, we'll provide technology access and training to individuals with sight loss across the nation. At the same time, through our advocacy efforts, we will fight to connect people of all ages with the technology they need and want, and help them build the skills to capitalize on its potential.

This program will not only help our clients lead more independent, active lives, but it will make it much easier for them to achieve higher education, pursue meaningful careers, and more fully participate in life and the economy.

Through CNIB's Accessible Technology program, we will:

- **Get technology into the hands of the people who need it** through innovative initiatives like **Phone It Forward** (see page 12)
- **Develop a unique "app store"** specific to blind and partially sighted people
- **Provide group and individual training** on accessibility features and functions of common technology
- **Engage business and industry** for accessible "off the shelf" technology features and solutions
- **Partner with community organizations**, public libraries and community centres for access to meeting spaces and cross-sharing of technology training expertise



Introducing Phone It Forward

Donate a smartphone. Change the life of someone who's blind.

Technology can level the playing field for people who are blind or partially sighted, but only when it's accessible, available and affordable.

We believe finances should never present a barrier to Canadians with sight loss who need a smartphone - a piece of technology that can profoundly improve the quality of someone's life after a serious loss of vision. That's why we created the Phone It Forward program.

Phone It Forward is a new CNIB program that gives smartphones to people with sight loss who need them.

It's really as simple as 1, 2, 3. Here's how it works:

1) Individuals and businesses donate their used smartphones. We're asking people and companies across Canada to donate their used smartphones for this very worthwhile cause. We'll happily accept any modern smartphone, and we'll give each donor a tax receipt for the value of the phone(s) they donated.

2) Our partner organization refurbishes the phones. We're working with a leading private Canadian smartphone repair and refurbishment organization. If the donated phone is modern enough to be accessible to blind users, this organization will fix it up and outfit it with a suite of accessible apps. Otherwise, it will be sold, and the earnings will be put towards the cost of a new or nearly-new smartphone for a blind user.

3) We give them to people with sight loss who need them. Once the phone has been refurbished, we'll give it directly to a Canadian with sight loss who is waiting for one. We'll also give them one-on-one training on how to use it and offer data plan support to individuals who need it.

100% of the donated phones and their proceeds will stay within this program. This singular focus will ensure the needs of people who are blind drive every aspect of the program, including device delivery, individual training and follow-up support.

"My phone has become a vital tool for reading, navigating the world and identifying items in my kitchen. New apps like Be My Eyes can connect me with a sighted volunteer to provide me with immediate visual help through a live video phone call. Today's technology has made my life a hundred times better."

-Jason Fayre,
individual who is blind



Phone It Forward: support offerings

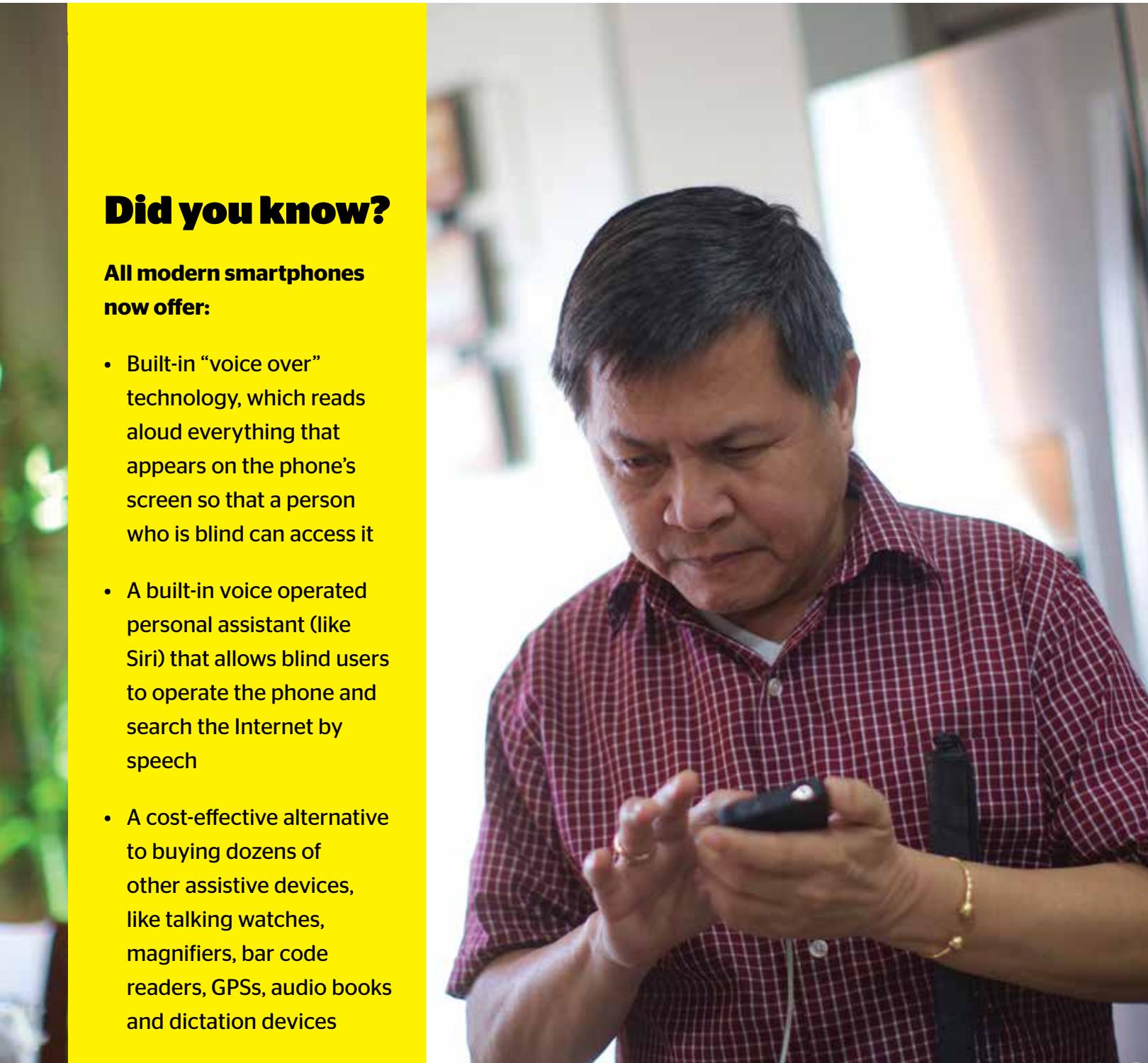
We want to maximize the immediate and long-term success of the **Phone It Forward** program, so in addition to the smartphones themselves, we'll also provide:

- **Knowledge and skills training** so that individuals with sight loss can confidently use this technology to its full advantage. We'll provide training where it best meets the needs of the program participants, whether that's a central location or somewhere in the participant's local community.
- **Ongoing support** if users have any questions or challenges after the initial training has been completed. This support will include user groups and a full suite of information and support services that will be provided not only in-person, but also by phone and online for individuals in remote communities.
- **Discounted maintenance** to ensure participants can enjoy their smartphones for as long as possible. Our partner organization will not only ensure each refurbished phone is guaranteed with a warranty, but they'll also provide participants with discounted repair services, device upgrades, accessory packages and for those in financial need, access to reduced rate data plans.
- **Data plan support** to individuals who are in financial need and would be unable to afford a mobile data plan without assistance. No one with sight loss should be denied access to life-changing technologies because they cannot afford them.

Did you know?

All modern smartphones now offer:

- Built-in “voice over” technology, which reads aloud everything that appears on the phone’s screen so that a person who is blind can access it
- A built-in voice operated personal assistant (like Siri) that allows blind users to operate the phone and search the Internet by speech
- A cost-effective alternative to buying dozens of other assistive devices, like talking watches, magnifiers, bar code readers, GPSs, audio books and dictation devices



Measuring success

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

In conjunction with our other Accessible Technology programs, **Phone It Forward** has been designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Demonstrate how technology supports people with sight loss in almost every aspect of life.
- Ensure every Canadian with sight loss has the accessible technology they want and need.
- Ensure no CNIB participant cites cost as a barrier to acquiring and using that technology.
- Demonstrate that technology access not only helps people with sight loss increase their independence and mobility, but also leads to acquiring meaningful employment.
- Provide the knowledge and skills for people with sight loss to use technology to its full advantage.
- Provide people with sight loss with discounted phone repair services, device upgrades, accessory packages and where there is financial need, access to preferred data plans with carriers to remove barriers to ongoing participation.
- Demonstrate that technology can be used to underline the value that a blind or partially sighted person can bring to the table.

Using a range of methodologies, we'll track outcomes of our Accessible Technology Program and **Phone It Forward** as part of our strategic plan over the next four years.

These measures will be directly linked to employment and education figures as we work to close the gap between sighted, blind and partially sighted individuals.

"The biggest barrier for people who are blind in the workplace is misconception. With simple accommodations and an open-minded organization, it's not blindness that holds people back from working, it's the stigma and assumptions about what people with vision loss can do."

Jim Lee, Chief of Staff to the General President,
International Association of Fire Fighters.

We need your support

Like all our programs, Phone It Forward is helping to level the playing field for people with sight loss - but we can't make it happen without support from people like you.

Although we're offering Phone It Forward to people with sight loss free of charge, the process of developing and delivering this program is resource-intensive. 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 the challenges they face, and what they want and need from this program.
- **Program development:** We work with our in-house experts, volunteer advisors and accessible technology training leaders to ensure this program responds to participant needs and reflects national best practices.
- **Program implementation:** We recruit and train dynamic staff and volunteer leaders to launch this program and work to optimize all aspects of its delivery and marketing to improve the participant experience.
- **Impact reporting and expansion:** We'll routinely monitor the effectiveness of this program to ensure participants have the best possible outcomes and are reaching their individual goals. We'll use the data we gather to continually evolve and expand the program and identify emerging needs for the future.



"My smartphone is a huge asset at work and in my personal life. It helps me accomplish everyday tasks on Word or Excel. Also, the zoom application acts as a handheld magnifier, so I can read cosmetic and clothing labels and identify colours, which are vital for all my fashion needs!"

-Keya Osborne, individual with sight loss

How you can help

If you'd like to support this initiative and put smartphones in the hands of those who need them, you can:

- **Donate your company's retired smartphones:** You can provide smartphones directly to Canadians who are blind or partially sighted Canadians by donating your company's used smartphones to **Phone It Forward**. As a donating partner, your company will receive exposure on the **Phone It Forward** website (phoneitforward.ca) and CNIB's social media platforms as a key leader of this initiative. Your company will also receive a tax receipt for the value of the donated devices.
- **Donate funds for data plans:** Without an Internet data plan to pair with it, a smartphone has limited use for someone who's blind or partially sighted outside of WIFI-connected areas. As part of the **Phone It Forward**, we're working to provide financial support for data plans for Canadians with sight loss who are in financial need and would be unable to afford a data plan without some assistance. Your support can help establish a data plan fund for individuals in need across Canada, so that they are able to use their smartphones to their maximum potential, both at home and in the community.
- **Support CNIB's Accessible Technology Program:** There is a significant unmet need in technology access and training programs designed specifically for people with sight loss. **Phone It Forward** is just one of many innovative initiatives within CNIB's Accessible Technology Program – and these initiatives live and breathe on the generosity of people like you. Ask us about how you can make a monetary gift to support other services within CNIB's Accessible Technology Program.

To you, it's a smartphone. To those we serve, it's a better life.



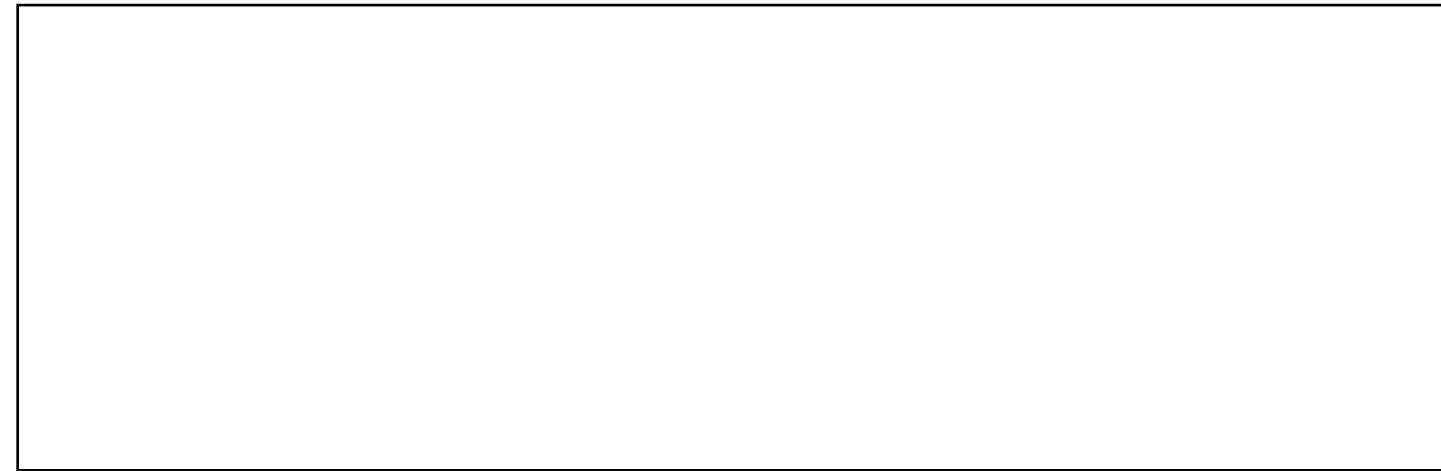
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Web: cnib.ca

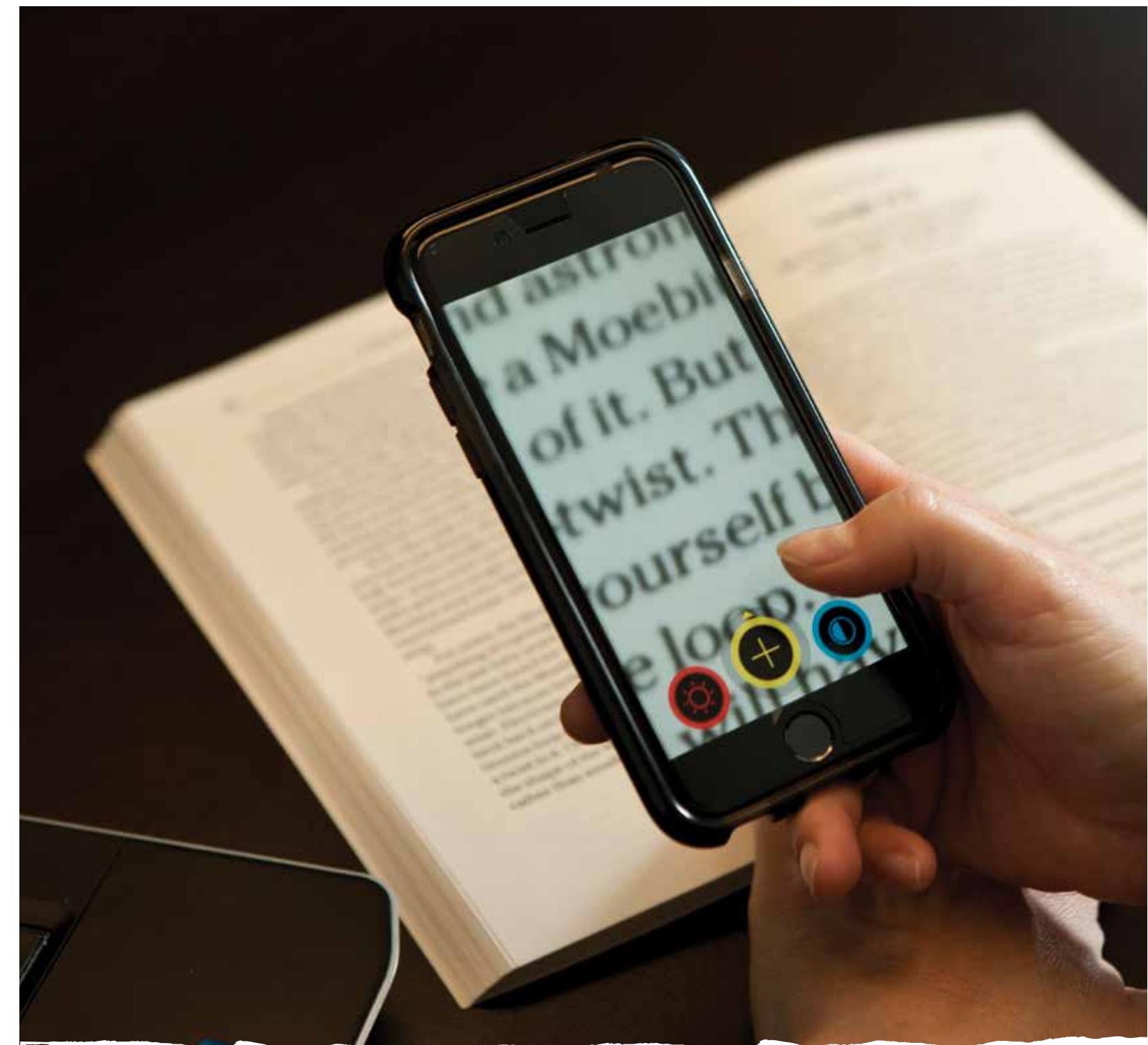
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To support Phone It Forward or learn more about the program, visit phoneitforward.ca or contact the CNIB team member listed below.



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 us

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.

