

A young man with dark hair, wearing a brown jacket over a dark shirt and blue jeans, stands on a sidewalk. He is holding a white cane with his right hand raised. Behind him is a large tree with pink cherry blossoms. The background is slightly blurred, showing a street and some buildings.

CNIB

ABOVE AND BEYOND

CNIB Annual Report 2020-2021

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.



Values

- Empowerment
- Inclusiveness
- Innovation
- Passion
- Collaboration
- Integrity



The Extra Mile Is Just the Beginning

Message from the CEO and Board Chair

We'd like to begin this annual report with a message of gratitude after an extraordinary year.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, volunteers, and advocates, we were able to push ourselves harder than ever in the last year - and ensure our participants received the support they needed from us. Our mantra hasn't been to "go the extra mile", but to start with the extra mile, and then keep going. It hasn't been to heed the call of duty, but to go above and beyond it for the people we serve.

The past year posed new challenges not only to our organization but - more pressingly - the people we serve. Isolation, a shifting employment landscape, physical distancing, navigating a touchless world: These are all adversities that many of our participants continue to face in our current reality.

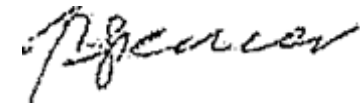
To everyone who helped us be there for those who needed us in the last year - whether you made a donation, volunteered your time, attended a virtual fundraising event, or shared our advocacy appeals - thank you. In these uncertain times, many charities have been forced to curtail their programming or close their doors entirely. We at CNIB have managed to not only survive, but strengthen - and provide even more support to our participants than ever before, in new and innovative ways. That would not have been possible without the unwavering support of you, our community.

In this annual report, you'll learn more about how we've worked to adapt and expand our programs to meet the unprecedented need we currently face - including by implementing a suite of virtual programming options for both individuals and groups. You'll also learn about some of our advocacy achievements over the last years, as well as the progress we've made on the goals of our Bold Dreams, Bright Futures strategic plan.

Once again, we couldn't have achieved any of this without you. And so, we thank you: Our many supporters and champions across Canada.



John M. Rafferty
President and CEO



Robert Penner
Chair, Board of Directors

Life-Enriching Programs

Supporting our community in all aspects of life

CNIB's programs give people impacted by blindness the confidence, skills, and tools to go after the lives they want. Our programs are organized in six categories that reflect the ambitions, needs, and interests of our community...



LIVE

Our “Live” programs are about building a rich, full life with blindness. They connect participants with a community of support and help them enhance their daily living skills so they can seize the future with confidence.



PLAY

Our “Play” programs make having fun easy, whether someone is learning how to paint or hitting the streets on a tandem bike. They're all about connecting with others and showing that people with sight loss can do anything.



WORK

Our “Work” programs give participants the skills and resources to achieve their career ambitions, and help employers tear down barriers for blind job-seekers and employees.



LEARN

Our “Learn” programs foster social development and independence for students who are blind, and teach braille literacy skills to people of all ages.



TECH

Our “Tech” programs open up new worlds of information and accessibility, with access to innovative devices, tools, and the training participants need to get the most out of them.



ADVOCATE

Our advocacy efforts seek to bring about change so people with sight loss can participate fully in society as equal citizens. When we fight for rights, they become ingrained in society.

More than a Job

When Ann Harnish started losing her sight to retinitis pigmentosa, she was filled with anxiety. There were so many things to consider, so many ways her life could change because of her sight loss. But what worried her most was the prospect of losing the career she loved and had worked so hard to build.

“ This is more than just a job to me,” Ann says of her work. “This is my passion. I was made for this. ”

Ann worked as a residential care worker for Metro Community Housing Association in Halifax, Nova Scotia, supporting adults living with mental illness in a residential care facility. She says the time she spent on the clock never felt like work. It felt like going home – and spending quality time with people she cares about deeply.

“I get to spend hours with amazing people. They have taught me so much. Not only am I a part of their lives, but their families’ lives too. We’re all family.” The idea of losing her role – and losing touch with that extended family – was something she didn’t want to face.



Ann Harnish is proud to have held on to the career she loves with support from the CNIB Come to Work program.

Fortunately, thanks to CNIB’s Come to Work program, she didn’t have to.

Come to Work is a multifaceted program designed to give Canadians with sight loss the tools and skills to build or retain meaningful careers. Part of the program involves helping people hold on to the

jobs they had before they experienced sight loss using a range of methods, like making simple accommodations to the work environment.

When Ann reached out to us for help, our specialists visited her worksite to assess the facility and her job duties. They suggested new lighting and other small accommodations to help Ann continue to do her job with confidence, and they also hosted an information session about sight loss for her colleagues so they could work with her in an inclusive and supportive way.

Today, Ann is proud and thankful to have retained her role with Metro Community Housing Association, and continues to find joy in her work – each and every day.

“With the right tools, people with sight loss can be set up for success,” she says.

Virtual Programming



Reaching more Canadians than ever before

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging in many ways, it was also the catalyst for an incredible win: We're now able to reach more Canadians who need us than ever before thanks to virtual programming.

Whether it was check-in calls, career support, tech training, youth groups, book clubs, coffee chats, or essential grocery and prescription shopping, we leveraged every opportunity to ensure our participants stayed connected and felt supported. Our expanded online programming helped to maintain a sense of community, reduce isolation, and create life-changing social and educational experiences.

By transitioning our programs to a virtual environment - free of geographical boundaries - we are reaching new people, more people, and offering more support than ever before. In fact, 90 per cent of participants have told us they want virtual programs to continue, and they will.

Over the course of the last year:

- We conducted 10,000+ check-in calls to our participants nationwide to ask how they were doing and offer support.
- We delivered 4,000+ virtual programs to people with sight loss of all ages, as well as their families.
- Participation in our virtual programs increased by 50% from the year before.



“ If you’re not working and you’re at your wits’ end at home, the ‘CNIB, Read to Me!’ program helps introduce a schedule to your day... Kudos to the CNIB Foundation for coming up with all these programs. I really appreciate what the organization has done. ”

– Norma Cowell, participant in ‘CNIB, Read to Me!’ virtual storytelling program

CNIB Guide Dogs

Meeting the increased demand for partners in mobility

When border closures caused by COVID-19 resulted in a more than 375 per cent increase in applications, CNIB Guide Dogs committed to addressing this challenge head-on. We knew Canada was facing a significant guide dog shortage, and we needed to take immediate action for the people we serve.

Collaborating with international partners

The international community of guide dog organizations responded to our call for assistance – as good friends do in times of need. When travel restrictions made it impossible to transport puppies from our breeder in Australia, our friends at Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs arranged to have their volunteers raise our pups until they could be safely transported to Canada. Meanwhile, Leader Dogs for the Blind in Michigan and Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind in New York provided us with dogs that were ready to begin their advanced training.

Safely opening the CNIB Canine Campus

The CNIB Guide Dogs Canine Campus opened in March of 2020, but it had to close immediately to comply with provincial lockdown measures. Fortunately, local volunteer boarders allowed our dogs to be placed and well cared for in homes within the community during that period. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of the CNIB team, all provinces later deemed guide dog training and guide dog support services an essential service, allowing the Canine Campus to safely reopen in June 2020 with physical distancing measures in place.

Expanding and reimagining training

Due to gathering restrictions during the pandemic, CNIB Guide Dogs adjusted its training program to accommodate one-on-one, at-home training to keep everyone safe. At the same time, to meet the need for guide dogs in Canada, CNIB Guide Dogs recruited more guide dog trainers and guide dog mobility instructors, including apprentices.



When Ollie Found Hope

In many ways, nine-year-old Ollie is just like any other little boy. He likes to have fun, make new friends, and learn new things. But he's also been through more than most kids his age.

Two years ago, Ollie was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. He lost his sight soon after when the lymphoma relapsed in his brain and affected his optic nerves.

The challenges that Ollie is facing would be tough for any child. Luckily, he doesn't have to face them alone. He has his buddy dog, Hope, by his side.

Through the CNIB Guide Dogs program, we not only match guide dogs with adults who are blind or partially sighted, but we also match very special buddy dogs like Hope with children like Ollie who need them. Whether it's feeding, grooming, or walking this well-trained family pet, buddy dogs give children an opportunity to care for a dog and in some cases, help make it easier to transition into a guide dog partnership in the future.

Since they were matched in March, Hope has provided tremendous comfort to Ollie on his rough days and encouraged him to play and go for walks on his good days. Because of his compromised immune system, it hasn't been safe for Ollie to spend time with friends during the pandemic, so having Hope around helps him feel less isolated.

His mom says that when Hope came to live with them, Ollie no longer needed his mom or dad to sleep in his room at night when he was afraid of the darkness. Snuggling Hope, Ollie now sleeps through the nights. He's also helping Ollie build his independence and learn to work cooperatively with a dog.

One day, if he chooses, the CNIB Guide Dogs team will be proud to match Ollie with a guide dog of his own. In the meantime, he has Hope to lean on.



Ollie proudly shows off a certificate marking his partnership with his buddy dog, Hope.



Hope isn't just a good friend to Ollie; she's also helping him build confidence and independence.

Our Strategic Ambitions

Our work is guided by our Bold Dreams, Bright Futures strategic plan, which was built on the feedback of more than 4,000 Canadians impacted by blindness. That plan centres on three strategic ambitions that are at the heart of everything we do...

Strategic Ambition #1

Boost participation in the world of work

A job is so much more than just a pay cheque: it's a means to self-reliance, a source of identity and pride, and a gateway to a brighter future. From the moment children are old enough to dream what they'll be when they grow up, through every stage of their education and careers, we'll fuel their ambition and champion their equal participation in the world of work.

Strategic Ambition #2

Unleash the power of technology

Technology can level the playing field for people who are blind or partially sighted – but only when it's accessible, available, and affordable. We'll fight to connect people of all ages with the cutting-edge technology they need and want, and help them build the skills to capitalize on its potential.

Strategic Ambition #3

Drive achievement and equality

Life is a beautiful, wonderful, crazy thing. Life with blindness should be no different. We'll embolden people who are blind or partially sighted to lead independent, active lives and chase their dreams – and we'll smash the stigma and barriers that stand in their way.

On the following pages, you'll learn about our progress on achieving each of these ambitions over the last year.



Boosting Participation in the World of Work



A year ago, we couldn't have predicted how the employment landscape would shift throughout the pandemic, and neither could the thousands of Canadians who've come to us for help with their employment situation since it began. To meet the rising need, we have dramatically increased our career support to ensure no one with sight loss is left behind as we champion equal participation in the world of work.

Expanding career support when it was needed most

Because of the increased level of need caused by the pandemic, we put an even greater emphasis on expanding the reach of our career programs over the last year. As a result, we saw a 300 per cent increase in memberships to our CNIB Come to Work Talent Pool; a 600 per cent increase in memberships to CNIB Venture Zone, a program that gives entrepreneurs the tools and skills to start or build their own business; and we matched 450 per cent more job seekers with professional mentors to help them advance in their chosen careers.

Real-world job opportunities

Through our Come to Work program, we partner with leading Canadian employers to create on-the-ground job opportunities for candidates living with sight loss. Last year, our Come to Work partner community increased by 70 per cent, and we're proud to be collaborating with some of Canada's top employers, including Apple, Canadian Tire, TD, and the Government of Canada.

Networking opportunities, only a click away

In 2020, Connecting the Dots - Canada's largest conference focused on education, technology, and employment for people with sight loss - went virtual, enabling us to collaborate with many of our employer partners to offer engaging sessions for more than 1,000 attendees from around the world.

“ So many qualified people who are blind are willing to work, but there are few opportunities to work in a barrier-free environment. Come to Work is an imperative program that finds untapped talent with the objectives to retain or obtain and maintain employment. ”

- Alex Barnes, Come to Work program coordinator and member of the sight loss community





“ I wouldn’t be able to live without things like my smartphone, my GPS navigator and my ‘i.d. mate’ labeller. With technology, I can pretty much go and do whatever I want. It’s freedom. ”

- Khrisstina Engel, CNIB participant

Unleashing the Power of Technology

More than ever, Canadians with sight loss are relying on technology to perform hundreds of daily activities – from shopping to working, paying bills, attending school and connecting with loved ones. If there was ever any doubt, the pandemic has shown us that access to cutting-edge, reliable assistive technologies isn't a luxury, but a necessity for tens of thousands of people with sight loss.

No child left behind

As students and families adjusted to remote learning, CNIB released a free version of our iOS training manual for children with sight loss, “The ABCs of iOS: A VoiceOver Manual for Toddlers and Beyond”.

This key resource ensures educators and family members have the tools to teach a child who is blind or partially sighted how to use iOS (the Apple operating system) with VoiceOver.

More smart devices, more independence

The CNIB Smartlife program expanded greatly over the last year, with 20,000 sales transactions and 900 assistive technologies available. The program now features tech coaches, technology program leads, and several other experts who help maximize the impact of technology for all ages in communities across Canada. Meanwhile, we distributed more than 1,000 smartphones to Canadians with sight loss free of charge over the course of the pandemic, and increased distribution of smart devices by more than 300 per cent in the last year alone.

Technology training for all

Throughout the pandemic, the need for technology training has become more and more critical for many of our participants, particularly those in an older demographic who may be less confident in this area. In fact, since the launch of our expanded virtual programming in March 2020, technology has become CNIB's most sought-after group offering. In order to meet the demand, we increased delivery of our group technology training programs by 60 per cent over the last year.

Driving Achievement and Equality

Over the last year, we worked in collaboration with people who are blind or partially sighted across Canada, taking action on a number of key issues and working to transform our communities into beacons of accessibility and inclusion.

Empowering financial independence

Imagine having to share your PIN with the cashier at a grocery store just to make your purchase. Every day, thousands of Canadians with sight loss face this reality due to the inaccessibility of payment terminals. But thanks to more than \$500,000 in funding from the Government of Canada, we're working with Moneris Solutions, Canada's largest payment processor, to improve the accessibility of payment terminals nationwide.

Making insulin pumps accessible

Despite there being 750,000 people with diabetic retinopathy in Canada, no accessible insulin pumps exist on the market – making it difficult for thousands to manage their diabetes. That's why, in partnership with Diabetes Canada, CNIB is working to find a solution. We've conducted research to gain insights into the issue, and raised our voices to urge manufacturers to incorporate universal design. We commit to continuing this work until an accessible insulin pump is made available for those who need it.

Fighting for accessible vaccinations

As COVID-19 vaccination clinics rolled out across the country last year, CNIB publicly urged provincial governments and local public health units to ensure their vaccine distribution strategies were accessible to Canadians with sight loss.

Physical distancing public awareness

In response to recommendations that everyone keep a distance of at least two metres from others at all times last year, CNIB launched a public awareness campaign urging people to consider something very important: Canadians with sight loss – especially those living alone – may need to rely on a sighted individual for urgent needs. The campaign resulted in 32 million media impressions, 49 stories in Canadian media outlets, and more than 5,000 social media engagements.



“ Through our advocacy programs, we’re working to empower Canadians who are blind or partially sighted. Our participants are the ones leading the charge, and our work is about ensuring they have the tools, skills, and opportunities to do that. Our powerful campaigns are driven by the needs of the community, to create forever change in society. ”

- Thomas Simpson, CNIB Director of Public Affairs and Advocacy



It Takes a Village

Every day, we provide life-changing support to thousands of people with sight loss of all ages. We couldn't do that without a dedicated community of staff, volunteers, donors, and advocates behind us.

Outstanding employees

From our service specialists to our phone operators... from our guide dog trainers to our accessible technology leads, the CNIB team is made up of hundreds of talented professionals who are dedicated to creating a more inclusive world for people with sight loss - and who go above and beyond the call of duty, each and every day.

Senior leadership team

John M. Rafferty, President and CEO

Maria Ash, Chief People Officer

Diane Bergeron, President, CNIB Guide Dogs and Vice President, International Affairs

Angela Bonfanti, Chief Operating Officer

Garry Nenson, Chief Development Officer

Kathy Rabideau, Chief Financial Officer

Passionate volunteers

We couldn't keep our doors open without the hard work of our volunteers; they're the heart and soul of our work, and true partners in the delivery of our programs and services. In the last year, our passionate team of nearly 5,000 volunteers contributed more than 300,000 hours to CNIB's mission.

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Our Brand Ambassador

We're proud to work with Ben Mulroney, CNIB's Brand Ambassador, to raise awareness about our work, as well as issues facing people with sight loss, among Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Ben's goal is to amplify the voices of people with sight loss and help smash through the barriers that stand in their way.

Generous donors

Year after year, we are continually astounded by the unwavering support of our donors. Some of you attended a virtual fundraising event, others made a gift in your will, signed up to be a monthly donor, or donated in memory of a loved one. However you chose to help, you made it possible for thousands of Canadians with sight loss to lead fuller, more joyful lives. Thank you!

Donor spotlight: The Nanji Family Foundation

Thanks to the generosity of the Nanji Family Foundation, we were proud to celebrate the grand opening of the state-of-the-art Nanji Family Foundation CNIB Smartlife Centre in Toronto in September 2020. It was the first of many CNIB Smartlife Centres to come - places where people with disabilities can explore the latest assistive technologies in a modern, easy-to-navigate environment that looks and feels just like home.

If that weren't enough, the Nanji Family Foundation also made an additional generous gift in 2021, which will make it possible for five more Nanji Family Foundation CNIB Smartlife Centres to open across Canada in the next year.



Thank You to Our Incredible Donors!

Major gifts

CNIB thanks the following individuals, corporations, foundations, and service clubs who have made exceptional gifts of \$5,000 or more.

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24 HR Animal Care Centre
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Estate gifts

We wish to honour the caring individuals who have left gifts in their wills to CNIB, and we send our sincerest condolences to their families and friends.

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Many of our supporters have discovered that you can make a profound difference in CNIB's work with a little planning. We're here to help you explore the donation methods that will ensure your gift is tax effective while taking your family's needs into consideration. There are many different options besides a gift in your will, including a gift of life insurance, RRSP/RIFF, TFSA, guaranteed investment funds, a gift of securities, and charitable gift annuities.

For more information, please contact:

Cindi Meyer
Director, Planned Giving
cindi.meyer@cnib.ca
1-800-563-2642 (ext. 7470)



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Friends for Life

CNIB thanks the following individuals for creating legacy gifts in support of our work in the last year. We greatly appreciate our legacy donors whose gifts will touch countless lives for years to come.

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Catherine Luyten-Friedman
Céline Robitaille
Dale Gorveatt
Denise M McCullough
Donna Pon
Donna Thompson
Doreene Campbell
Edward Gebert
Eleanor Sanders
Ernest Karlson

Friends for Life

Fay Ming
 Francine Lambert
 Gael Debney
 Grace Scott
 H. Hendrick
 H.J. Hijkoop
 Irene Lemoine
 Jacques Gagné
 Jael Mongeau
 James Milner
 Jane Baker
 Janet Allingham
 Jean-Yves Bouchard
 Jennie Sheito
 Jennifer Yagar
 Joan Rebeiro
 Joan Siple
 John Robinson
 Joyce Given
 Karen Floyd
 Kathleen Bolivar
 Keshia Charles
 L.M. Burman
 Lise Morin-Couture
 Lise Ouimet
 Louise Larose
 Madeleine Stinson
 Marcelle L. Lecours

Margorie Dunlop
 Marie-Josée Thuot
 Marina Burry
 Martin Reinbold
 Mary Yack
 Melvin Siple
 Michelle Greve
 N. Keyowski
 Nicole Langlois
 Patricia Powers
 Penny Finneron
 Peter Large
 Robert Barrow
 Robert Fitzpatrick
 Robert Groulx
 Sandra Anderson
 Sheila Haaranen
 Sheila Rayer
 Sherrie Davis-Thompson
 Sheryl Tetarenko
 Shirley Hudson
 Susanne Jopko
 Suzanne Gauthier
 Sydney Matheson
 Vicki Loftus
 Victoria Gordon
 William Goetz



Endowments: A living legacy

The CNIB endowment fund was established in 1950 to provide sustainable programming for individuals impacted by blindness. You can continue that legacy of caring. By creating an endowment, donors enjoy knowing how their capital investment is making an impact today, while using it to encourage friends, families, and associates to make gifts in their honour. They consider this a double win, creating a living legacy.

**For more information,
please contact:**

Cindi Meyer
 Director, Planned Giving
 cindi.meyer@cnib.ca
 1-800-563-2642 (ext. 7470)

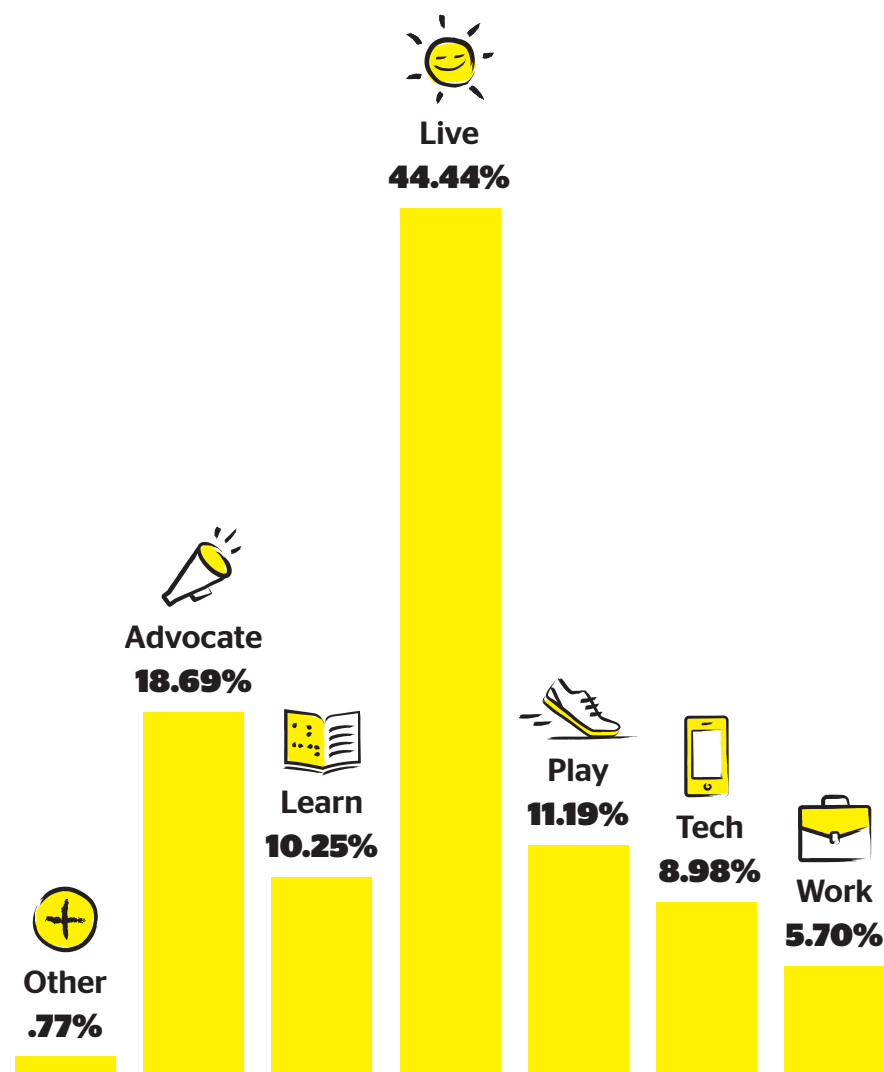
Your Support in Action

As a charter member of the Imagine Canada Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code, CNIB takes pride in upholding the highest standard of ethics in the distribution of donations.

Our financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations and were audited by Deloitte LLP.

CNIB is accredited by the Imagine Canada Standards Program and has met 73 standards in board governance, financial accountability and transparency, fundraising, staff management, and volunteer involvement. This accreditation is in effect from 2020 to 2025.

Last year, we invested \$29 million directly into programs for Canadians with sight loss. The financial support for these programs comes from public support (42%), government funding (16%), investments (15%), retail lottery and gaming (9%), fees for service (5%), consumer products and assistive technology sales (5%), and other revenue generation initiatives (8%).



For CNIB's complete audited financial statements, please visit cnib.ca/financials.



Founded in 1918, CNIB 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.

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