



CNIB Foundation Ontario

2020 pre-budget submission

Prepared for the Minister of Finance

December 2019

Our recommendation:

Strengthen Ontario's workforce by investing \$3 million over 3 years to ensure Ontarians who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind have access to jobs and resources that will remove barriers to employment while boosting the economy.

Jobs are needed for Ontarians with sight loss

Ontarians want to work. Ontarians with sight loss are no different. However, for more than 681,000 Ontarians with sight loss, getting access to a job or re-integrating into the workforce is difficult. People do not want to be living on social assistance – they want to be employed.

In the Speech from the Throne, Lieutenant Governor Dowdeswell said this government would help create and protect jobs – "it will protect the jobs of today and build a stronger economy for the future". **This government has a responsibility to get Ontarians with sight loss back to work.** The CNIB Foundation is here to help.

As a partner in this journey, the Ontario government does not have to look for a solution. In November 2018, the CNIB Foundation launched Come to Work, a specialized program that connects job seekers who are blind or partially sighted with employers who want to discover the full potential of Canada's talent. Since the launch, we have built partnerships across all sectors and trades. Our partners, including Apple, BMO, Deloitte, Lenovo, Myplanet, Rogers, etc., provide job opportunities for our talent pool members, including youth with sight loss. In addition to connecting employers with innovative talent, the CNIB Foundation offers individualized support to the employer and employee, beyond what is offered through employment agencies. Furthermore, some disability employment websites, such as DiscoverAbility, are leaving job seekers with sight loss on the sidelines, as their platform is not compatible with screen-reading software.

Simply put, our program is working, but we need your support. Funding from the Ontario government will ensure that our talent pool members, including youth with sight loss, have good jobs, and they will no longer rely on social assistance programs. Our talent pool is diverse. It includes people of all ages. It includes those who have extensive professional experience who are new to sight loss but want to get back to work. It includes those who have been out of the world of work for too long and yearn for employment.

As stated at the end of the Speech from the Throne, "help is here". Let's work together to help Ontarians who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind have access to jobs and resources that will remove barriers to employment while boosting the economy.

Come to Work

Building on this success, we wish to strengthen the impact of the Come to Work Program in partnership with the Ontario government. Through this funding we can:

1. Provide programs and resources that move people on their employment journey through the 5 stages of job readiness from "Adjusting to Vision Loss" to "Working Already".
2. Expand the network of Come to Work employer partners across all industries. We request that the Government of Ontario becomes an employer partner.
3. Deliver consultation services that facilitate accommodations and workplace training for employers and employees, which sets both parties up for success.
4. Partner with government to share our best practices in disability employment, which can help improve the employment sector.

Through a \$3 million investment over three years from the Government of Ontario, this program will create good jobs and boost the economy.

Sight Loss & Employment Rates

The unemployment rate for persons with sight loss is triple the Canadian general unemployment rate.¹ In a recent survey by CNIB, 64 per cent of respondents indicate workplace accessibility as a barrier to finding a job. Further, 61 per cent see employer attitudes as a barrier to getting hired, and 60 per cent see technology barriers as a significant barrier in getting hired. With your commitment, we will boost the economy through better employment outcomes for those who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind.

About CNIB – To create powerful change for people with sight loss, the CNIB Foundation Ontario, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Ontario and CNIB Deafblind Community Services play unique roles in serving our community, but all of them are connected by an unwavering passion to change what it is to be blind today.

The **CNIB Foundation Ontario** is a not-for-profit organization that empowers more than 681,000 Ontarians impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose. Funded by charitable donations and enabled by the selfless contributions of volunteers, our innovative programs and powerful advocacy drive change across the province.

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Ontario provides training that enables people who are blind or partially sighted to develop or restore key daily living skills, helping enhance their independence, safety and mobility.

CNIB Deafblind Community Services is one of the leading providers of specialized support and emergency services for people who are Deafblind – enabling them to maximize their independence and engagement with the world around them.

¹ CNIB International Levels of Employment Study, 2018.