Front Page

The Canadian Council of the Blind October 2025 White Cane Magazine

The Voice of the Blind in Canada

Cover Image: A close-up of a colourful world map with the countries labelled in braille.

Celebrating World Sight Day

Inside:

Sharing Lived Experiences

Advocacy 101

Vision Without Borders

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Specsavers Advertisement

Space age tech has landed at Specsavers.

Book an eye exam including OCT from $99

Image Description: On a turquoise to white gradient background, Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield stares out with a determined look. He is wearing a blue jumpsuit with the Canadian flag affixed on each shoulder. His right arm is propped up against an eye exam device with a screen. His hands are together.

Logo: Specsavers

Eye exams provided by independent optometrists. Prices may vary by location. Visit [specsavers.ca](http://specsavers.ca) for details.

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Image Description: Four small photos in a square collage. The top left quadrant shows a man walking on a crosswalk while using a white cane. The number 8 is in white in the bottom right corner. The top right quadrant shows a hand holding a black smartphone. A cloud labelled “AI” beams out towards the smartphone. The number 13 is at the bottom right in white. The bottom left quadrant shows a group of people holding up their hands in peace signs in front of a blue sky. The number 20 is in white at the bottom right. The bottom right quadrant shows a man being tested with a Snellen chart. The number 40 in white is in the bottom right.

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President’s Message

Image Description: A headshot of CCB President Jim Tokos smiling. He is wearing a dark suit with a blue striped shirt and a dark tie.

Photo by: Andre Martin

The date of this issue of White Cane Magazine, Thursday, October 9th, 2025, marks a particularly special occasion: World Sight Day. Each year, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) coordinates this day to raise awareness about blindness and vision loss, reminding us all of the importance of eye care. We are publishing this issue on World Sight Day to join in raising awareness and to highlight the important work being done here in Canada.

For over 80 years, the CCB has been proud to stand as a leader in blindness, eye health, and advocacy. That leadership is strengthened by our collaboration with others who share our vision for a healthier future. We extend sincere thanks to all those working tirelessly on Bill C-284, the National Strategy for Eye

Care Act. This legislation represents a great leap forward for Canadians, and we are especially grateful to the Vision Health Partners advocacy group and their dedicated members, whose efforts continue to advance eye health and vision care across the country.

To mark this year’s World Sight Day, the Act Now, Act Together conference is taking place in Toronto. This event is a strong call to action on the issues that matter most to Canadians who are blind, have low vision, or live with eye conditions. If you are unable to attend, recordings will be available on the CCB website. We anticipate this event to be worthwhile, so stay tuned for the recordings!

Also featured in this issue is an editorial titled World Sight Day: A Canadian Perspective by Mike Potvin. His piece explores the theme “Love Your Eyes” through a distinctly Canadian lens. It is an inspiring read that you won’t want to miss. Other articles in this issue include Advocacy 101, Sharing Lived Experiences:

Collaborating with the Vision Loss Community, and The Get Together with Technology Program’s Perspectives on AI: Accessibility and Innovation in Focus.

As we celebrate World Sight Day, I encourage you to book an eye exam if you have not already done so this year. Your vision plays a vital role in your overall health and well-being, and regular eye exams can detect not only changes in eyesight but also early signs of other health conditions.

Together, by caring for our vision and supporting one another, we can continue to make a difference. In the spirit of our conference, let’s Act Now, Act Together!

Yours in service,

Jim Tokos.

National President, the Canadian Council of the Blind.

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Specsavers Editorial

Almost Half of Canadian Children Aren’t Receiving Regular Eye Exams as Myopia Rates Rise

Specsavers emphasizes the importance of early detection through regular eye exams as nearsightedness rates in children continue to grow.

Myopia (also known as nearsightedness) rates in Canadian children have steadily increased in recent years – progressing faster than in previous generations; however, according to a recent Specsavers Canada survey, conducted by Angus Reid Group, 82% of Canadians are unaware of this increase.

“We’re seeing a significant rise in the number of children being diagnosed with nearsightedness, more than ever before,” says Naomi Barber, Clinical Services Director at Specsavers Canada. “While lifestyle changes such as spending more time outdoors and limiting screen use can help slow the progression of myopia, there is more that can be done to slow the progression, and optometrists are at the frontline of this intervention. Specsavers is committed to raising awareness among parents about the importance of early detection.”

The Canadian Association of Optometry recommends that school-aged children receive a comprehensive eye exam every year until the age of 19. Yet, the recent national Specsavers survey revealed **45% of school-aged children in Canada are not receiving annual eye exams as recommended.** This gap in routine eyecare is concerning, especially as rates of childhood myopia continue to rise. Myopia has the potential to become the most common cause of irreversible visual impairment and vision loss worldwide.

Image Description: A young girl sits during an eye exam. An optometrist covers one of her eyes with an occluder. She focuses her gaze on a pen held in front of her.

Myopia management can slow progression of vision loss.

As part of its mission to change lives through better sight, Specsavers is encouraging parents to include a comprehensive eye exam in their children’s schedule. For children diagnosed with myopia, there are specific types of glasses and contact lenses that can help slow the progression of the condition. Specsavers offers several of these solutions, with savings available during the back-to-school season. Visiting an optometrist from a young age is important. Early intervention can help reduce children’s risk of developing long-term sight-threatening conditions.

Specsavers locations offer comprehensive eye exams by independent optometrists, including optical coherence tomography (OCT), a 3D advanced eye health scan that examines the back of the eye. The scan helps to assess eye health in detail and detect other causes that may be contributing to visual impairment. Children are covered for annual eye exams if they are under a provincial health care plan in most provinces.

“So much of parenthood is about preparing our little ones for a bright future,” adds Barber. “Whether they have their sights set on being explorers, athletes, artists, scientists, or musicians, we want to make sure they’re ready to do so with confidence and clear vision.”

Learn more about myopia management or scheduling an eye exam at [specsavers.ca/myopia](http://specsavers.ca/myopia)

Logo: Specsavers

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Fighting Blindness Canada Article

Fighting Blindness Canada’s Research Strategy:

Building a Foundation for Innovation

For more than 50 years, Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC) has fueled breakthroughs in vision science, driving discoveries that have transformed our understanding of blinding eye diseases. From establishing Canada’s first gene therapy clinical trial for inherited retinal diseases to advancing stem cell research and sight-saving surgical techniques, FBC-supported projects have laid the foundation for innovations that are now changing lives. These achievements are a testament to the power of community-driven investment in research.

Our new Research Strategy (2025–2030) reflects both this legacy and our unwavering commitment to the future. Developed in partnership with researchers, clinicians, and our community, it charts the path forward for Canadian vision research. By aligning with the priorities of the National Eye Care Strategy, FBC ensures that research advances are closely connected to improved care, equitable access, and meaningful outcomes for patients.

Through this renewed focus, we are accelerating progress toward treatments and cures— bringing hope, progress, and possibility to Canadians living with blinding eye diseases.

Learn more about FBC-funded research at [fightingblindness.ca/research](http://fightingblindness.ca/research)

Image Description: To the immediate right of the previous link, there is a symbol of a small orange mouse cursor.

Reliable Information.

Real connection.

Stay informed about the latest vision research, ask your questions, and connect with others who understand what you’re going through. Join us at upcoming View Point educational events – both in person and online.

[fightingblindness.ca/viewpoint](http://fightingblindness.ca/viewpoint)

Image Description: To the immediate right of the previous link, there is a symbol of a small orange mouse cursor.

Logo: Fighting Blindess Logo

Image Description: A circular photo framed by a hot pink and orange gradient border. In the foreground, many people sit in a lecture hall, facing a speaker in the background who is blurred.

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Editorial

World Sight Day: A Canadian Perspective

Image Description: A headshot of White Cane Magazine editor Mike Potvin smiling.

Photo by: Andre Martin.

On October 9, Canadians will join the global community in observing World Sight Day 2025, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of eye health and the urgent need for accessible, affordable, and equitable vision care. This year’s theme, “Love Your Eyes”, resonates deeply across

Canada’s diverse landscapes—from the mountain ranges out West, across the golden fields of the Prairies and to the beaches and surf in the East— reminding us that vision connects us to the beauty and vitality of our country.

In Canada, where universal healthcare is a point of pride, unfortunately, eye health remains an area where gaps persist. A recent national survey conducted by the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) revealed that while 97% of Canadians believe eye care is crucial to overall well-being, only half feel familiar with treatment options for serious eye conditions.

This disconnect highlights the need for better education and outreach, especially as Canadians face growing concerns over screen time, UV exposure, and environmental factors like wildfire smoke.

The See The Possibilities” photo contest, a uniquely Canadian initiative, invites citizens to share snapshots of their “corner of Canada,” celebrating the views that make our vision so precious. It’s more than a contest— it’s a celebration of the everyday moments that sight makes possible, and a reminder of what’s at stake when vision is compromised.

Organizations such as the Canadian Council of the Blind are leading the charge by promoting screenings, public education, and community engagement. Our efforts align with the global push by the World Blind Union and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness to ensure that eye care is not a privilege, but a right.

World Sight Day is not just about awareness—it’s about action. Whether it’s booking an eye exam, advocating for better coverage of vision services, or simply learning more about how to protect your eyes, every Canadian has a role to play. As we celebrate the

power of sight, let’s also commit to making vision care a national priority.

Because in a country as vast and vibrant as ours, everyone deserves to see the possibilities.

Mike Potvin.

Editor.

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Bayer Editorial

Recognizing the signs early: Liz Tully’s Journey with AMD

How long have you been diagnosed with AMD?

I have been aware of having AMD for about 25 years and I have had wet AMD for about 9 years. But even before my diagnosis, I knew much earlier that I might get it, because when I was in my early 40s, I knew that 3 of my family members had it. At first, the vision changes were so gradual that I naturally adapted without realizing it. It wasn’t until I developed the advanced form, wet AMD, that I really started noticing the differences.

Looking back, what were some of these vision changes you dismissed or overlooked at very initial stages?

Early on, I had difficulty seeing when moving from a light to a dark environment. I first noticed this when I went into a movie theatre after the movie had started. I couldn’t find any vacant seats, so I walked along the row, found one that looked empty and sat down, only to realize someone was sitting there. Fortunately, we both had a good sense of humour. But, at that time, it didn’t occur to me that it could be my AMD, but now I recognize it as one of the first symptoms. I also remember having trouble reading under poor lighting conditions. The lines would sometimes merge, or individual letters would appear in the wrong places. I’d have to blink really hard to get the lines to settle down. Another issue I had was when I was out walking. Sometimes I’d suddenly fall, and I now realize it was because I was losing my depth perception and contrast sensitivity. Even performing tasks like cutting a piece of paper, I’d end up cutting into thin air above or below it. For me, these changes were so gradual and slow that I didn’t even realize I was losing these skills.

How did knowing about your potential risk for AMD impact your approach to managing the condition and your daily life?

That knowledge was hugely important to me and that is why I strongly believe that people should have the opportunity to know if AMD could be in their future—if they wish to know. Over time, through my own experiences, conversations with others, and my research on AMD, I have gradually come to believe that there is a general belief in the ophthalmology world: that if a condition like AMD cannot be treated or cured, it should not be discussed with patients, because the knowledge could be too unsettling. But for me, it’s the opposite—I’m much better at dealing with what I know rather than the unknown. I’m independent and a planner by nature, and you can’t plan for something big like this without knowing about it. I understand that not everyone wants to know, but for those who do, I think testing can be incredibly helpful. It allowed me to be proactive—like noticing my loss of depth perception and contrast sensitivity—and make adjustments, like picking up my feet more when walking.

How did you react when you were told your condition had progressed to wet AMD?

At the time, I knew I had early/moderate AMD, so hearing the words was not the shock that it could have been. The news was still devastating, though—and all I could really handle that day. Even though I had long known this was a possibility, I was overwhelmed and anxious about the ongoing impact the disease could have on my life and those around me. It was incredibly important for me to speak with my doctor, to understand what to expect and how we could move forward together.

What would you say to someone that might be ignoring the early signs of vision change?

Ignoring it doesn’t mean it won’t happen! It just means you will be less prepared than you could have otherwise been if you develop a serious eye condition like AMD, especially wet AMD.

AMD doesn’t wait. Neither should you.

If something feels off, get your eyes checked.

Early detection can help protect your vision.

Schedule an eye exam today.

Learn how to live with and manage AMD. Scan this QR code or visit fightingblindness.ca to access helpful resources and tips on coping with vision changes in AMD.

Image Description: QR Code.

Testimony presented is from a real patient recounting their personal experience with AMD. This individual has provided their consent to share their story for the purpose of bringing awareness to AMD. Please note that individual experiences with AMD may vary. This is intended for general informational and educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. For medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, please consult a healthcare professional. This advertisement is unbranded and does not endorse or promote any specific medical treatments or products.

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Bayer Editorial

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss in people over the age of 55, affecting ~2.5 million Canadians.

In AMD, your central vision is affected, making it harder to do activities like reading, driving, and distinguishing faces.

Image Description: A young woman smiles. She is obscured by semi-opaque black spots, simulating AMD.

AMD is a progressive disease, which means that it gets worse over time. There are three stages of AMD based on the number of drusen on the retina. Drusen are tiny yellow or white spots made up of proteins and fatty substances that result in central vision loss. There are three stages of AMD based on the number of drusen on the retina.

AMD typically begins as dry AMD and can progress to wet AMD at any stage.

Early Stage

Dry AMD

Low quantity of drusen.

May not show any symptoms.

Intermediate Stage

Dry AMD

The quantity of drusen is higher than it was in the early stage. Mild blurriness in central vision or trouble seeing in low lighting.

Advanced Stage

Dry AMD

The quantity of drusen is quite high.

Marked distortion of straight lines, difficulty reading and driving at night, gradual loss of central vision, or dark, blurry areas in the center of vision.

Wet AMD

The quantity of drusen is quite high.

A gradual or sudden loss of central vision, or dark, blurry areas in the center of vision.

What is the difference between dry and wet AMD?

Dry AMD

Characterized by gradual thinning and breakdown of the macula, the center of the retina that is responsible for detailed central vision.

Central vision loss tends to occur more slowly.

Wet AMD

Caused by leaky blood vessels that damage the macula.

Sudden onset with more rapid and significant central vision loss.

Did You Know?

Risk factors for AMD include older age, smoking, extensive UV light exposure, family history of AMD and cardiovascular disease.

Wet AMD accounts for 10% – 20% of AMD cases.

80% – 90% of severe cases of AMD-related vision loss are caused by wet AMD.

Once AMD is present in one eye, there is an increased chance of it developing in the other eye.

Self-monitoring for AMD-related vision changes can be done at home using an Amsler grid.

Image Description: An Amsler Grid. It is a white graph with black lines, forming lots of small squares.

**Keep healthy vision in focus: visit your doctor for a routine eye exam†**

†Adults without eye conditions aged 40-64 should have routine eye exams every 2 years. Adults aged 65 years or older should have an annual eye exam.

Learn how to live with and manage AMD. Scan this QR code or visit fightingblindness.ca to access helpful resources and tips on coping with vision changes in AMD.

Image Description: QR Code

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® TM see www.bayer.ca/tm-mc

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Member of Innovative Medicines Canada.

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Canadian Council of the Blind Article

Image Description: A man walks across a crosswalk while using a white cane. He is in a residential neighbourhood, with lush green trees in the background.

Sharing Lived Experiences

Collaborating with the Vision Loss Community

By: Shelley Ann Morris

I was born with low vision. Throughout my life, I have been asked to participate in numerous consultations and focus groups, complete surveys, attend walkthrough visits, test products, digital tools and websites for their accessibility. These opportunities are most impactful when offered from the outset, rather than

as an afterthought. Retrofits and last-minute fixes can be more costly, time-consuming, and less effective. A proactive approach that includes people with lived experience from the beginning not only leads to better results, but it also helps build trust. Based on my own experience, here are some suggestions that organizations may consider when inviting members of the blind/low vision community to share their unique experiences.

People in the vision loss community are often invited

to participate in surveys, focus groups, accessibility walk-throughs, and usability testing for websites and digital tools. Here are a few practical ways organizations can strengthen the collaboration process:

Make the Ask Meaningful

When inviting individuals to share their lived experiences, clearly explain why their input is valued and what accommodations are available. A thoughtful invitation sends a strong, positive message: your organization is committed to inclusion and accessibility.

Design Accessible Surveys

Surveys must be accessible for users who rely on screen readers and magnification software. Be sure to use a high-contrast and clear, logical layout. Ensure that important information is not placed exclusively on the right side of the screen, as this can make it harder to locate with high magnification. All buttons and

menus should be correctly labelled to be read aloud by screen readers. Surveys should not “time out” too quickly—some participants may need additional time. Include clear deadlines to encourage timely responses. Many users in the community have found platforms like SurveyMonkey to be relatively accessible and

easy to use.

If you are asking for assistance with testing a website, be sure to ask those who have low vision or no vision at all. For a well-rounded opinion and thorough test, ask people who use different kinds of screen readers and magnifiers as well as other types of devices—smartphones, tablets, desktop and laptop

computers. Give participants specific, real-world tasks to assess ease and usability.

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Host Inclusive Focus Groups

Focus groups are a great way to gather meaningful feedback from those who use your services, venues, or products. Clearly state the time, date (including day of the week), location, and duration of the session. If the group spans multiple time zones, note them all. End times are especially important for those coordinating

transit or personal support. For online focus groups, ensure the platform works well with adaptive technologies. Give participants time to troubleshoot any tech issues at the start. Provide written materials in accessible formats ahead of time. At the beginning of the meeting, establish guidelines for turn-taking to ensure everyone can participate. Keep in mind that using chat functions during a session can interfere with screen readers. Some participants may also have difficulty enabling their camera or locating the “Got it!” button when recording consent is requested.

Plan Successful On-Site Visits

There’s nothing quite like an in-person assessment by individuals with vision loss to evaluate accessibility honestly. When organizing an in-person visit, provide the venue name, complete address, and which entrance to use. Make sure that accessible parking is available and that there are transit options as transportation can be a huge obstacle for those who do not drive. Preparing visitors for any security protocols or construction zones at the venue. Offer support with wayfinding, either through hosts or designated meet-up points. Provide a contact number in case visitors get lost or delayed. Make sure facilities (like washrooms) are fully accessible and that service animals have a relief area.

Engage a Diverse Range of Participants

The most effective walk-throughs or product testing sessions include a variety of people with different lived experiences—those with low vision, no vision, guide dog users, cane users, people using mobility aids, and individuals with additional disabilities. Ask participants to complete specific tasks or visit particular areas.

This structured feedback helps identify strengths, potential barriers, and opportunities for improvement. Afterwards, hold a debriefing session to gather insights and answer follow-up questions.

Plan for Individual Accommodations

Making accommodations can seem complex, but it often starts with a simple question: “What do you need to participate fully?” Some standard accommodations might include seating preferences (front row for better hearing/seeing, opportunities to sit or stand or access to rest breaks). Some individuals may require sighted guide assistance for wayfinding or accessing

food/drink. Asking these questions during the registration process allows for thoughtful, seamless planning—ensuring all participants are treated with professionalism, dignity and respect.

Keep in Touch

Sharing post-session minutes, survey results, and next steps is a great way to demonstrate that participants’ opinions, observations and suggestions are part of the process. Leave the door open for further discussions, questions and suggestions.

Show Gratitude and Appreciation

Participants from the blind/low vision community are generously offering their time, insights, and lived experience. While financial compensation may not always be possible, there are many meaningful ways to show appreciation. Provide refreshments or meals. Offer taxi or transit vouchers. Send a personalized thank-you note. Give a small honorarium or gift card. These gestures reinforce your commitment to inclusion and respect for the expertise offered by the community.

Final Thoughts

Creating truly accessible experiences begins with inviting participation from the vision loss community and listening to those who know these barriers best. Collaborating with the vision loss community—early, often, and meaningfully—leads to better outcomes for everyone. With thoughtful planning and sincere appreciation, organizations can build stronger partnerships and help create a more inclusive world.

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Association québécoise de la dégénérescence maculaire Article

Logo: Association québécoise de la dégénérescence maculaire logo

Image Description: A group of older adults gathers in a brightly lit room. They are laughing together.

Image Description: Two women, one older and one younger, sit together on a set of chairs. The older woman sits closest to the frame and is wearing a sunhat. Both women are laughing.

Sortons la dégénérescence maculaire de l’ombre

La dégénérescence maculaire est la maladie neurodégénérative la plus fréquente au monde : elle touchait environ 200 millions de personnes en 2020, et les projections indiquent qu’elles seront 288 millions d’ici 2040. Au Québec, plus de 500 000 personnes en sont atteintes.

Ce chiffre dépasse largement celui de la maladie d’Alzheimer, pourtant bien plus connue du grand public.

La dégénérescence maculaire est méconnue de bien des gens. Elle affecte la vision centrale, limite l’autonomie à un stade plus avancé et touche plusieurs générations de membres d’une même famille lorsqu’elle est héréditaire.

L’AQDM – 35 ans au service de sa communauté.

Depuis 1990, l’AQDM soutient des milliers de personnes atteintes et leurs proches, en leur offrant information, orientation, accompagnement, défense de l’accès aux traitements et aux aides visuelles, tout en menant des campagnes de sensibilisation auprès du grand public.

Sur son site Internet, elle rend disponibles des renseignements détaillés sur la maladie, sur les moyens de s’adapter et de ralentir sa progression et sur l’évolution des traitements et des aides visuelles. Sur sa chaîne YouTube, elle propose une série de conférences virtuelles en français données par des professionnels de la santé reconnus.

Santé visuelle au Canada: agir ensemble

L’AQDM est fière de collaborer avec le Conseil canadien des aveugles et d’autres organisations canadiennes qui ont pour objectif d’améliorer la santé visuelle et l’autonomie des personnes atteintes par une limitation visuelle, dont la dégénérescence maculaire.

Découvrez nos services, nos événements et nos ressources sur : aqdm.org

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Image Description: A smiling couple embraces each other as they smile at the camera. They are both wearing glasses.

Image Description: Two people, an older woman and a middle aged man, smile at each other.

Image Description: A multi-generational family gathers at a coffee table with mugs. They smile and laugh with each other.

Let’s Bring Macular Degeneration Out of the Shadows

Macular degeneration is the most common neurodegenerative disease in the world. In 2020, it impacted nearly 200 million people, a number that’s expected to climb to 288 million by 2040.

In Québec, over half a million people live with the condition—far more than those affected by Alzheimer’s, which receives greater public attention.

Despite its prevalence, macular degeneration remains unfamiliar to many. It affects central vision, erodes people’s independence as it progresses, and its hereditary forms can impact multiple generations of the same family.

AQDM – serving the community for 35 years.

Since 1990, AQDM has helped thousands of people with macular degeneration and their families by providing information, guidance and support. It also advocates for access to treatment and visual aids, and runs awareness campaigns to inform and engage the public.

AQDM’s website offers comprehensive information about macular degeneration, including adaptation strategies, methods for slowing the disease, and the latest therapies and assistive technologies. Its YouTube channel features a series of French-language webinars led by respected health professionals.

Vision health in Canada: a joint effort.

AQDM is proud to collaborate with the Canadian Council of the Blind and other Canadian organizations working to improve the visual health and autonomy of people with sight loss, including individuals with macular degeneration.

To learn more about our services, events and resources, visit aqdm.org.

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Canadian Council of the Blind Chapters and Office Information

Canadian Council of the Blind

Active CCB Chapters

BC-Yukon Division

100 Mile House & District Chapter

Alberni Valley Chapter

Blind-Yukon Chapter

Campbell River Chapter

Chilliwack & District Chapter

Comox Valley Chapter

Dogwood Chapter

Festival of Friends Chapter

GTT BC Chapter

Kamloops WC Chapter

Kelowna Blind Curlers Chapter

Hands On Yarn Chapter

Lower Mainland Chapter

Nanaimo Chapter

Parksville and District 69 Chapter

Prince George Blind Curling Chapter

Provincial Book Club Chapter (BC)

South Okanagan Chapter

Sunshine Coast WC Chapter

Vancouver Arts & Culture Lovers Chapter

Alberta Division

Calgary Club

Edmonton Cribbage Chapter

GTT Edmonton Chapter

Saskatchewan Division

Regina Chapter

Ohana Saskatoon Chapter

Ontario Division

Afloat Chapter

Carleton University Chapter

Chatham-Kent Chapter

Club ‘60’ Barrie Chapter

Cornwall Chapter

Dragon Boat Toronto Chapter

GTT North Bay Chapter

Hamilton Blind Curlers Chapter

Hamilton Chapter

Listeners Book Club

London Vision Impaired Curlers Chapter

London Chapter

McMaster University Chapter

Mississauga VIP’s Chapter

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Ottawa Chapter

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New Brunswick Division

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Miramichi Club

Moncton Curling

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Canadian Council of the Blind Article

The Get Together with Technology Program’s

Perspectives on AI: Accessibility and Innovation in Focus

By: Corry Stuive

As we all witness the rapid growth and implementation of Artificial intelligence (AI) some exciting new benefits are being realised

by persons who are blind or have low vision. Obviously, the more general tasks associated with AI that we are now witnessing, embracing and utilizing like research, and information gathering, just to mention a few, will benefit us all. Beyond those there are some relatively new and exciting AI benefits more specifically geared to enhance the lives of persons with vision loss that have emerged.

Technology in general has played a key role in the lives of persons with vision loss. Having access to modern day communication vehicles like email, texts and the internet have helped tremendously in leveling the “equal access to information” playing field. Programs like the CCB’s Get Together with Technology program (GTT) have helped in empowering persons with sight loss to embrace technology via this highly successful peer support and mentoring program. The benefit of equal access to information can not be overstated, from text books for students to menus for diners and everything in-between. The ability to access information independently over the past few decades has been dramatic in a hugely positive way.

And now enter AI, whose initial benefits have included enhanced item or product identification, photo description and wayfinding assistance, just to mention a few.

By utilizing a camera on a smart phone or perhaps a pair of smart glasses, like the relatively new Meta Glasses, AI via audio prompt can identify what the camera is seeing. Identifying products, reading directions, communicating colour and assisting with mobility are merely a few of the areas where AI can, and will, be extremely beneficial.

In the kitchen alone AI assistance can be a huge equalizer and helper. Let’s do some cooking. First: product identification. (Trust me, a can of cream of chicken soup feels and sounds a lot like a can of cream of mushroom.) From there let’s see if there are any specific heating instructions. Now let’s make sure our stove or microwave settings are accurate. As you can see there are tasks that we often don’t even think about but AI assistance can, and will, be a great benefit.

Photo, picture and graphic description is another AI task and feature that has been warmly embraced by the sight loss community. AI’s ability to quickly and accurately communicate what is on a photo or picture, via a detailed audio description, has opened up a whole new level of access to such matter that previously was unavailable in an independent manner.

Yes, some of these “assistance required” tasks have been available thanks to some wonderful apps like Be My Eyes previously, however, with AI this information can be secured instantly and, more importantly, independently.

Who knows what might lie ahead? Can real-time audio description utilizing a camera simulate what we see with our eyes be far behind? AI is evolving rapidly and although we may be apprehensive about its existence and future, the benefits for some should also be considered.

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Bausch + Lomb Editorial

The Evolving Understanding of Dry Eye Disease in

Canada

Why Early and Comprehensive Care Matters

Dry Eye Disease (DED), medically known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca, is recognized as a chronic condition that can significantly affect comfort, vision, and quality of life for millions of Canadians¹, ². Despite its prevalence, DED often goes undiagnosed or undertreated, leaving many people to cope with symptoms that could be better managed².

What We Now Know About Dry Eye Disease

DED is a multifactorial condition involving an imbalance of the tear film, which is essential for protecting and nourishing the ocular surface³. When this balance is disrupted through tear film instability, ocular surface inflammation, or epithelial damage, patients may experience irritation, fluctuating vision, and reduced quality of life³.

In Canada, surveys suggest that between 21% and 30% of adults experience DED symptoms². This translates to more than 6 million Canadians affected—a significant public health consideration. Women and older adults are disproportionately impacted, in part due to hormonal changes associated with aging¹.

September is recognized as Healthy Aging Month, a reminder that age-related changes can affect many aspects of health, including eye health. Dry eye is more common with aging¹, making awareness and early management especially important for older adults. Environmental exposures such as Canada’s cold, dry winters, indoor heating, and lifestyle factors like prolonged screen time and reduced blinking further worsen symptoms³.

Types, Causes, and the Role of Inflammation

DED is broadly categorized into:

* Aqueous-deficient dry eye, where tear production is insufficient.
* Evaporative dry eye, the more common form, frequently associated with Meibomian Gland Dysfunction (MGD)³.

Inflammation is a central mechanism in both forms³. Left unchecked, it can create a cycle of worsening tear film instability, ocular surface damage, and persistent discomfort³. Evidence suggests that addressing inflammation directly is key to breaking this cycle and supporting longer-term management outcomes³.

The Canadian Reality: Impact Beyond the Eyes

DED affects patients well beyond eye comfort. In Canada, the annual economic burden per patient has been estimated at $24,331 CAD, with significant loss in productivity and quality of life⁴.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged dry eye to be a substantial economic burden as it is a leading reason why people seek eye care services due to painful and troublesome

symptoms. Furthermore, the WHO indicated that population ageing, coupled with environmental and lifestyle changes, will lead to an increase in the number of people with dry eye5. Patients with DED often report challenges with reading, driving, computer use, and daily work activities, contributing to reduced performance and well-being², ⁴. Research has also linked DED to

higher rates of sleep disturbances6 and an increased likelihood of anxiety or depression, highlighting its broader health impact7.

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Today’s Approach: From Relief to Long-Term Care

Management of DED requires a layered approach tailored to each patient³:

* Artificial tears and lubricating drops are a first step, offering temporary comfort by supplementing the tear film³.
* OTC eye drops specifically indicated for dry eye go beyond general lubricants. These therapies are formulated to replenish and protect the tear film in ways designed for dry eye patients³.
* For individuals with chronic or more severe symptoms, advanced prescription therapies are available to help disrupt the inflammatory cycle that drives ongoing disease³. These options can support longer-lasting relief when over-the-counter measures alone are not enough³.

This stepwise strategy, from OTC options to targeted advanced therapies, allows care to be both personalized and progressive.

The Role of Eye Care Providers

Healthcare providers are central to detecting and managing DED. Regular eye exams help identify tear film instability and ocular surface changes early, enabling preventive strategies and timely intervention³. Pharmacists can also reinforce adherence, provide guidance on correct drop administration, and recommend indicated OTC options³.

Moving Forward: A Holistic Mindset

In 2025, the understanding of DED emphasizes chronic disease management rather than short-term relief³. Combining education, environment-based adjustments, OTC options, and advanced therapies when needed, may improve comfort, reduce disease burden, and enhance quality of life for Canadians living with dry eye², ³, ⁴.

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Logo: Bausch

This editorial is sponsored by Bausch + Lomb

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Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada Article

Image Description: Alex Itenson, a veteran, stands in front of bookshelves jam packed full of books, decor, and military helmets. He smiles at the camera.

Honouring Their Service

Supporting Veterans on the Path to Independence

By: Shane Guadeloupe

Two veterans from different eras, both having served in the CanadianArmed Forces, live in separate provinces with distinct eye conditions, yet they are supported by the same healthcare organization.How do they overcome challenges? By harnessing their military mindset, they show resilience and adaptability in a different kind of struggle—fighting for independent living after losing their vision—and attain empowerment through vision rehabilitation therapy.

When Freedom Fades

Alex Itenson from Ontario has always been an adventurer ,having enlisted in the Army in 1959. As a lover of fast cars, he enjoyed being on racetracks in his free time. As a parachuting and skydiving enthusiast, he was constantly jumping out of planes. In fact, he was the first Canadian to jump a Ram-Air parachute. Now 85 years old, Itenson is living with wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), an eye condition affecting the retina and leading to rapid vision loss.

"At the end of March [2024], I had a massive hemorrhage of my right eye with an abrupt vision loss," Itenson shares. "...in a matter of minutes, my vision went. I'm now legally blind, and Ino longer drive. So, I lost my freedom.”

Mark Shaver, 65, from Manitoba, spent 25 years in the Canadian Armed Forces and met his wife Edith while stationed in Germany. Now, his two daughters keep the family tradition alive by actively serving. After his active duty discharge in 2008, Shaver was diagnosed with Glaucoma during a routine eye exam."By 2023, the pressure in the optic nerve was getting more damaged," Shaver shares. "I was starting to lose my peripheral vision, especially in my left eye." By 2024, Shaver had lost vision in both eyes. "I couldn't drive, couldn't work. It was pretty scary...my whole world turned upside down."

Image Description: Edith and Mark Shaver take a selfie together, smiling proudly. Mark, on the right, wears his medals of honour.

Living on his own, Itenson faces challenges to his independence since experiencing vision loss.

"I'm usually a very independent person, which got me into the trouble of the army," Itenson says with a chuckle. "The scary part is you don't know how much worse your vision can become. It's no wonder many people who lose their vision suffer from depression."

Fortunately, for both men, their respective ophthalmologists referred them to Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC). As a national health care organization, VLRC is a Veterans Affairs Canada-approved provider of vision-related services, a prescriber of vision-specific products (equipment) and offers accessible vision rehabilitation.

The VLRC Approach: Beyond Vision

Vision rehabilitation is a highly effective and specialized process in which individuals of all ages with vision loss can maximize their remaining vision and develop compensatory skills, ultimately allowing them to live independently. This process involves learning new "tactics" and "strategies"for people with partial vision or blindness to enjoy independent living.

VLRC's certified specialists and therapists work with a full spectrum of clients who are born with blindness or acquire it later in life—from children and their families to young adults, working-age adults, and seniors.

A Customized Strategy

Using a range of adaptive techniques, assistive technology, low-vision aids, and orientation and mobility training, both veterans were able to regain some of their independence.

"VLRC never offered a one-size-fits-all solution," Itenson explains. Duringhis sessions, VLRC's therapists customized their rehabilitation tactics to address his specific needs. "I had just bought a touchscreen coffee maker and was concerned I wouldn't be able to operate it," he relays. Using techniques customized by his therapist, he was able to use the machine."You get pleasure out of the little things in life."

Continuity of Care:Providing aLifetimeof Support

When Shaver's ophthalmologist referred him to VLRC in 2023, he primarily took advantage of their assistive technology service.

Image Description: Math Shaver stands outside in his backyard. He stands in front of a fence and lush arbor. He wears sunglasses and stands thoughtfully with his white cane held between two hands.

"I was still working at the Air Force Base [as a finance clerk] and was doing a lot of work on the computer." In sessions with the assistive technology specialist, Shaver discovered a variety of devices and techniques, plus he learned to use a closed-circuit television (CCTV). "It was mind-blowing. Ihad no idea of how much is out there in the way of aids and how to usethem." With the CCTV system, also known as a video magnifier, Shaver enlarged text and objects, allowing him to continue reading, writing, and working on a computer. CCTV users can adjust magnification, contrast, and brightness to suit their needs. Later, after experiencing vision loss in both eyes, Shaver easily reconnected with his Client Care Navigator at VLRC to address his new needs, thanks to VLRC's ability to support clients throughout all stages of vision loss.

From Fear to Freedom

As an avid cook, vision loss made it difficult for Shaver to prepare meals. "I was nicking myself with the knife," he notes. Through the skills he developed during his in-home rehabilitation sessions, he is now able to maneuver safely. "I'm doing pretty good in the kitchen...and haven't served up anything that we shouldn't be eating," he jokes.

Through orientation and mobility training, Itenson learned how to navigate his neighbourhood, ultimately crossing busy intersections to visit his local Royal Canadian Legion hall—a meaningful social connection for him.

"The first time I crossed the main intersection with traffic lights—I tell you—it was terrifying. And not all drivers stop for you," Itenson recalls.

Image Description: Alex Itenson shares photos of himself skydiving and parachuting, pointing out highlights.

More Than Just a Service

As an authorized Veterans Affairs Canada provider, VLRC offers visionrehabilitation services in person, over the phone, in group settings, or through tele-health. Additionally, VLRC is authorized to offer low services and aids through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program."Now with Veterans Affairs, that all came in handy to get a lot of the stufft hat I need, from white canes to even the little gadget to put on my cup to let me know when it's full [of liquid], Shaver says. "A lot of things were100% covered… as a veteran, that's a huge relief."

To other people, including veterans experiencing vision loss, Itenson advises, "Reach out for help immediately, it makes a difference because it's a whole new world."

To learn more about VLRC's services for Veterans, please visit: <https://visionlossrehab.ca/en/veterans>.

To learn more about VLRC's services for First Nations, Inuit, and Métisindividuals and communities, please visit: <https://visionlossrehab.ca/en/indigenous-health-care>.

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Canadian Ophthalmological Society Article

Image Description: A close up of a woman’s face. Her eye is surrounded by an elaborate cyclical design. A blue light passes over her iris.

Seeing the Future: Canadians Embrace Vision Health as a Priority – A Look at Awareness, Innovation, and What Comes Next

Canadians are increasingly informed and engaged when it comes to their eye health. A recent national survey by the Canadian Ophthalmological Society reveals a promising shift: Canadians understand the importance of vision care and are ready to champion progress in education, access, and innovation.

Image Description: A woman with dark hair faces a retinal camera.

Image subtitle: Canadians overwhelmingly value access to leading-edge technologies.

Innovation in Vision Care: A Shared Priority

Canadians overwhelmingly value access to leading-edge vision care technologies— and are eager to see these advancements become more widely available. 92% agreethat access to innovation in eye care is important. Three in four Canadiansfeel confident in their current access to innovations, a strong foundation to build upon. This positive outlook reinforces the importance of continued investment in research, technology and innovation, and system-wide improvements.

Climate and Vision Health: A New Awareness

As environmental conditions evolve, Canadians are becoming more aware of how climate can affect eye health. 38% reportthat factors such as UV exposure, wildfire smoke, and cold winds have impacted their vision in the past year. This growing awareness is a key opportunity to promote proactive eye protection and public education campaigns that help individuals safeguard their sight in changing environments.

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Protecting Young Eyes in Today’s Digital World

Canadians are clearly attuned to the impact of screen time on children’s vision—a sign of strong engagement in preventive care. 82% express concernabout screen exposure in young people. This concern supports a broader movement toward digital wellness, regular eye exams, and eye-friendly routines for kids. Families are well-positioned to make informed choices that help preserve healthy vision from an early age

A Vision for the Future

Canadians are becoming more engaged, informed, and optimistic about their eye health. As public understanding grows and new technologies become more accessible, there is clear momentum toward a healthier future for all. By supporting: expanded education initiatives, access to innovations, continued policy advocacy the vision health community is well-positioned to meet Canadians’ needs and ensure strong, clear sight for generations to come.

Image Description: A retinal camera shines on a demonstration model face.

Image subtitle: 92% agree that access to innovation in eye care is important.

Image Description: A young girl sits on her bed. She is wearing eyeglasses and holding a tablet up to her face.

Image subtitle: 82% express concern about screen exposure in young people.

COS plays a pivotal role in ensuring excellence in eye care across Canada. With its members at the forefront of vision care as eye physicians and surgeons, the COS works to assist them to provide exemplary eye care. Collaborating with allies in eye health care and government, the Society seeks to improve vision health policy and initiatives. Through strategic alliances and dedicated advocacy efforts, the COS aims to elevate awareness, mobilize resources, to prevent blindness, preserve vision, and improve overall eye health. Our mission underscores the importance of collective action and cooperation in safeguarding the precious gift of sight for all Canadians.

Logo: Canadian Ophthalmological Society

Cos-sco.ca

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Canadian Council of the Blind Article

Advocacy 101

Advocacy is at the Heart of the Canadian Council of

the Blind — But What Does It Mean to Be an Advocate?

By: Jessa Ross

Simply put, an advocate is someone who pushes for change. Whether this be at their workplace, in their hometown, or at the national level, an advocate sets a goal and works to accomplish it. With the passing of Bill C-284: the National Strategy for Eye Care Act, now is a great time to get involved in advocating for changes to how Canada approaches eye and vision health. There are many different ways to be an eye and vision health advocate. Not all advocacy happens at the national level. In fact, large advocacy movements often start with an individual or group of like-minded people. Most organizations differentiate between three kinds of advocacy: self-advocacy, community advocacy, and systems advocacy. These often reinforce or overlap with each other.

From standing up for your rights to engaging with government officials, advocating helps shift harmful perspectives and systems.

Self-advocacy

Most people practice self-advocacy every day. Being a self advocate means sticking up for yourself and what you believe in. You are the best person to be advocating for yourself. You know your needs best and should feel confident bringing them to the attention of others, whether this be your friends, your community, or your municipal and provincial officials.

A strong self advocate:

* Consults trusted sources on eye and vision health,like their general practitioner, optometrist, or the Canadian Association of Optometrists.
* Stays educated on their rights and responsibilities.
* Stands up for themselves and their needs.
* Speaks up when they know something is wrong.
* Asks questions when they need clarification.
* Knows their strengths and weaknesses.
* Requests accommodations when they need them.
* Celebrates their achievements.
* Rests when they need to: self advocating is hard work. Having self care strategies at the ready can be beneficial.

Image Description: At the bottom of the page, atop a background of clear blue sky, many people gather while holding signs. Each person is holding their hands up in peace signs.

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An advocate sets a goal and works to accomplish it.

Community Advocacy

By uniting with people who have shared experiences and goals, you can amplify your impact. The Canadian Council of the Blind knows the value of community. Our Chapters, which are all across Canada, are examples of how community advocacy can make real change.

Community advocates:

* Unite under a shared goal.
* Make connections across communities.
* Fundraise for the causes they support.
* Amplify the voices of people with lived experience.
* Share resources to help educate others about their cause.
* Reach out to decision makers and use their collective voice to make a difference.
* Ensure their campaigns are accessible and inclusive.

Systems Advocacy

Systems advocacy is about changing the laws or policies that impact our lives. It can take time and persistence, but it often leads to significant changes for the better.

Systems advocacy looks like:

* Writing letters to government officials.
* Launching petitions to get the word out.
* Sharing posts on social media to extend the reach of the message.
* Meeting with their elected officials to have discussions about what matters to them.
* Partnering with organizations to provide a unified front.

Each level of advocacy is equally important. No matter how you choose to use them, your voice and perspective are powerful tools. From standing up for your rights to engaging with government officials, advocating helps shift harmful perspectives and systems. By taking action and working together, we can advance a culture of eye and vision health in Canada.

National Educational Association of Disabled Students Advertisement

National Educational Association of Disabled Students

Building Employment Pathways Job Coaching

20 hours of FREE virtual coaching!

Whether you're exploring full-time employment opportunities, internships, career advancement, or navigating challenges in your current role, our experienced coaches are here to provide comprehensive guidance every step of the way! Scan the QR code to learn more today.

Image Description: QR Code

Image Description: Spanning the bottom of the page, on a dark blue background, is a cartoon of multiple people sitting or standing at a desk. The people are wearing bright clothing and some are using mobility devices like wheelchairs and crutches, while others wear glasses or use AAC devices.

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AMI Article

Enjoy AMI content in your home, on the go, and on the device of your choosing

Watch and Listen

Stream

Listen

Engage

Image Description: A brunette woman sits on a bench in a park. Her white cane rests beside her. She wears sunglasses and is speaking into her phone.

Image Description: Two women sit on a couch. One woman, on the left, holds a bowl of popcorn.

Image Description: A man with grey hair speaks into his phone.

Image Description: A man reclines on a couch. He holds a pillow to his chest. His eyes are closed and he wears a pair of over-the-ear headphones.

AMI.

Entertains Informs Empowers

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AMI Article

Image Description: *We Were Broncos* star Ryan Straschnitzki on the court during a wheelchair basketball game. He looks out to his teammates in anticipation. An out-of-focus referee stands in the background, with his whistle ready to blow.

AMI Announces New and Returning Content on AMI-audio, AMI-tv, and AMI+

AMI continues to create award winning content by and for members of the disability community that truly resonates with Canadians of all abilities.

“It’s really raw…doesn’t sugar coat and doesn’t exaggerate the struggle,” one AMI Research Panel member said of the AMI-tv/AMI+ docuseries Crip Trip. “Love the messaging and inclusion awareness,” one fan wrote on social media about Pretty Blind, the new scripted comedy on AMI-tv/AMI+. AMI is pleased to reveal its upcoming slate of new and returning series for AMI-audio, AMI-tv and AMI+.

New on AMI-AUDIO

Reflections

Tuesday-Friday at 1:00pm Eastern

Hosted by Ramya Amuthan (Kelly & Company), Reflections listens in on how we make sense of the world, through conversation and the lens of the lived experience of the disability community, weaving our questions with your stories. “Reflections offers a thoughtful exploration into something we may not have considered or experienced ourselves,” host Ramya Amuthan says. “Our reporters bring us a piece on something that’s sparked their interest, anything from disappearing shirt pockets to the questions of AI relationships, losing things on public transit, to the state of accessibility in the beauty industry. It’s a chance to deepen our understanding of the human stories that make up the world around us.” Available as an audio podcast.

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Image Description: A headshot of Reflections host Ramya Amuthan. She is smiling and wearing a purple blouse.

Disability Rights, and Wrongs: The David Lepodcast

In this audio podcast, outspoken disability rights advocate David Lepofsky and AMI’s Jacob Shymanski welcome guests to discuss the latest in disability rights … and wrongs.

Returning series on AMI-audio

Voices of The Walrus

Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday at 8 a.m. Eastern

Veteran radio broadcaster Roger Ashby takes you into the pages of The Walrus, and a chorus of vibrant voices brings to life essays and fiction from some of Canada’s best writers. Available as an audio podcast.

My Life in Books with Red Széll

Monday, and Thursday at 8 a.m. Eastern

Join broadcaster Red Széll for My Life in Books with Red Széll, featuring one-on-one interviews with audiobook authors who discuss their life, works, and three books that have resonated with them. Available as an audio podcast.

Maclean’s Magazine

Tuesday and Friday at 8 a.m. Eastern

Anastasia Maclean and Paul Berry present a selection of feature articles from the most recent edition of Maclean’s.

The Guardian Daily

Daily at 9 a.m. Eastern

Hosted by Mike Ross, listen for a selection of feature articles from The Guardian, a British daily newspaper with a distinctly international outlook focused on politics, economics, and environmental issues.

The Globe and Mail Today

Daily at 10 a.m. Eastern

Corinne Van Dusen and Matt Speirs deliver the Canadian news, editorials and business, sports, and entertainment stories pulled from the latest edition of The Globe and Mail.

The Washington Post This Week

Daily at 11 a.m. Eastern

Shawn Lavigne and Paul Berry read American news and opinions from the latest edition of The Washington Post.

Double Tap

Daily at Noon Eastern

Tune in daily for new episodes of Double Tap for discussions, led by Steven Scott and Shaun Preece, on news, reviews, and technology stories of interest to people who are members of the blind, partially sighted, and disability community. Available as an audio podcast and video podcast on YouTube.

Audiobook Café (formerly AMI Audiobook Review),

Mondays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 1 p.m. Eastern

Host Jacob Shymanski keeps you up to date with the latest audiobook releases and literary news! Tune in as he shares in-depth conversations with authors, narrators, and industry experts. Available as an audio podcast.

Para Sport Nation

Sunday, Monday, and Saturday at 1:30 p.m. Eastern

Para Sport Nation is where elite competition meets real stories from the world of Para sport. Hosted by Paralympian Nathan Clement and AMI’s Alex Smyth, each episode dives into the athletes, events, and moments shaping adaptive sport in Canada and beyond. Also available as an audio podcast and video podcast on YouTube.

Visit AMI.ca/channels to find AMI-audio in your area.

AMI-audio programs are available free to download as

podcasts on all major podcasting apps and platforms.

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Image Description: The season 2 cast of Got Game, seven young people, smile for the camera. They are gathered around a wooden table, with a backdrop of shelves full of board games.

New series coming soon to AMI-tv and AMI+

Adapting

Between small town scandals, messy love triangles, and a whole lot of bad decisions, Adapting takes a heartwarming and raw look at disability, adolescence, and the minefield of family dynamics — dysfunction and all. Based on the concept by father-daughter writing duo Garner Ransom and Rachael Ransom, the series is inspired by Rachael’s real-life experiences with cerebral palsy, offering a long-overdue, unfiltered look at disability.

All In (with Tyler Turner)

Paralympic champion Tyler Turner pushes beyond his limits in All In (with Tyler Turner), an action-driven documentary series where he immerses himself in unfamiliar adaptive sports, learning from elite athletes, and redefining what’s possible.

History in 60

Journalist and author John Loeppky wants to tell the stories of Canada’s evolving disability history … and he wants to do it in 60 seconds. In each episode, John will dig into a moment of disability history and then take on the challenge of fitting it all into one minute.

Untitled April Hubbard documentary

This powerful documentary follows April Hubbard, a determined advocate with a tethered spinal cord and chronic pain, who is navigating the end of her life. April’s unwavering commitment to inclusivity, and her courageous decision to share her Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) journey sparks an emotional and

thought-provoking narrative.

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Returning series to AMI-tv and AMI+

Our Community

Returns Thursday, September 4, at 9:30 p.m. Eastern

to AMI-tv and AMI+

Celebrating its 10th season on AMI-tv, the Golden Sheaf Award-nominated Our Community highlights the people, places and organizations that have made life more enjoyable for Canadians with a disability.

Game Changers

Returns Thursday, October 2, at 9 p.m. Eastern

to AMI-tv and AMI+

Dave Brown is back for Season 2! Each episode of Game Changers finds Dave Brown in his element, visiting stunning locales while spending the day chatting with notable Canadians. Upcoming guests in the 20-episode season include Mary Walsh (This Hour Has 22 Minutes), Olympic gold medal-winning hockey goaltender Sami Jo Small, comedian Courtney Gilmour, barenaked Ladies’ Kevin Hearn, hockey analyst and Internet personality Steve Dangle, Gavin Crawford (Because News) and professional race car driver Marie-Soleil Labelle.

Got Game

Returns Wednesday, November 26, at 9 p.m. Eastern

to AMI-tv and AMI+

Hosted by Joshua Ang, the six-episode second season of Got Game explores coming-of-age in a board game café as six youths with disabilities share their stories in a round table discussion while playing inclusive tabletop games. Got Game provides an outlet for youth with disabilities to share their feelings, frustrations, triumphs, ambitions, and general outlook on life with a disability. But it’s not about defining these individuals by their disability; it’s about recognizing the individualism of these youth aside from their disability.

Additional returning series coming soon include Season 2 of Underdog Inc., Season 2 of Pretty Blind, Season 2 of Crip Trip, Season 2 of The Squeaky Wheel: Canada, Season 7 of Postcards From… and a brand new All Access Comedy special.

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Image Description: A woman sits on a soft carpet with her laptop open to the AMI+ streaming service.

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Image Description: Someone sits with their phone in their hand. The phone is open on the AMI Youtube channel.

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Canadian Council of the Blind Legacy Giving Infographic

Image Description: From left to right, a young boy, an older woman, and an older man pose on bicycles. They are smiling. A tree is in the background.]

Image Description: A young boy sits and faces forward. He is smiling as someone adjusts a phoropter in front of him.

Image Description: A light blue tree in the center of a white circle. The circle is outlined in two shades of blue: light and dark. White text sits in the outermost outline and reads “Legacy Society 1944.”

Envisioning A Brighter Future for All Canadians.

Your Legacy Gift

The 1944 Legacy Society is an esteemed group of likeminded individuals who encourage members to include the Canadian Council of the Blind in their wills. By doing so, 1944 Legacy Society members are honouring their commitment to a better future for all Canadians. Members are recognized on a Digital Donor Wall and receive an exclusive pin.

Donations through wills are often tax beneficial to your estate and loved ones while offering you the opportunity to empower the blind community. Your legacy can live on through technology training, preventive eye health advocacy, and innovative research. Including a gift in your will can take various forms, such as a percentage of your estate or property, a fixed amount, or stocks and other investments. Consult a legal professional to create a lasting legacy for the blind, and to ensure your Will is binding, accurate, and optimized for tax benefits.

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14 Chamberlain Ave, Unit 200, Ottawa, ON. K1S 1V9.

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In the News

For the First Time in Canada, Surgeons Put Teeth in Patients’ Eyes to Restore Sight

Surgery aims to restore sight by implanting a telescopic lens in a tooth

By Sheena Goodyear, CBC News

When Brent Chapman’s doctor first pitched him on the idea of having one of his own teeth surgically embedded in his eye to restore his sight, he says he felt “a little apprehensive.”

But then he spoke to a woman in Australia who had undergone the same procedure to tremendous success.

“She had been completely blind for 20 years, and is now snow skiing,” Chapman, 33, of North Vancouver, said. “I know it sounds a little crazy and science fiction-y.”

Chapman, who is blind in both eyes, is one of three Canadians undergoing osteo-odonto keratoprosthesis (OOKP) — or as it’s more commonly known, tooth-in-eye surgery — at a B.C. hospital this week.

It involves removing a patient’s tooth, usually the canine, installing a plastic optical lens inside it, and then implanting the whole thing into the eye.

While it dates back several decades, the surgery has never been performed in Canada before now. And if all goes well, one of the doctors behind the initiative hopes to make it available in the long-term.

How does it work?

Why a tooth? Because teeth have dentine, which is the hardest substance the body produces, making it the ideal casing to bridge the plastic lens and the patient’s eye, says Dr. Greg Moloney, an

ophthalmologist and surgeon at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital in Vancouver.

“There is no risk of rejection, because we’re using part of the patient’s own body,” he told As It Happens host Nil Köksal.

Moloney headed up the trio of Canadian surgeries this week. All of them went smoothly, he says, though the patients will be monitored closely.

He has performed seven successful tooth-in-eye surgeries in his native Australia before being recruited to do them in Canada. He says he’s used to people reacting to it with shock and horror.

Image Description: Brent Chapman poses along a coastal trail in Vancouver, BC with his german shepherd. He is wearing a grey peacoat and black sunglasses.

Image Caption: Brent Chapman has been blind or partially blind since he experienced a rare auto-immune condition when he was 13 years old. He hopes osteo-odonto keratoprosthesis will restore

his sight for good. Photo submitted by Phil Chapman.

“It is a rare operation that most people have not heard of, even if you are an eye surgeon,” Moloney said.

It’s not a cure-all for every vision problem, he says. It’s specifically meant for people with severe corneal blindness in the front of the eyes caused by conjunctival scarring from autoimmune diseases,

chemical burns and other traumas, but who still have healthy retina and optic nerves in the back of their eyes.

And often, Moloney says, it’s the last resort when all

other options fail.

That’s because it’s quite intensive, he says. It involves two surgeries, several months apart, which means Chapman and the two other Canadian patients will return to the operating room later this year.

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During the first surgery, Moloney and his colleagues remove the patient’s tooth, shave it down into a rectangle, and drill a small hole in it to accommodate the lens.

They then remove scar tissue from the patient’s eye and fill it with a small flap of soft tissue from inside their cheek.

Finally, they implant the tooth-encased lens inside the cheek so that it can grow new tissue around it.

A few months later, they go back in, remove the tooth from the cheek and sew it into the front of the eye, underneath the cheek tissue. The result is a pink-coloured eye with a small black circle, through which the patient can see.

Because the surgery is so intensive, he says they

only perform it in one eye.

The procedure is not risk-free, says Moloney.

“With any ocular surgery of any kind, there’s a chance that we could introduce infection and lose all our vision,” he said.

However, he says the surgery has been performed for several decades in 10 countries, including the U.K. and Australia, with a high success rate.

A 2022 study out of Italy found that, on average, 27 years after surgery, 94 per cent of patients could

still see.

“The risk-reward ratio for these patients, when they have no vision at all, is well worth it, we think,” Moloney said.

Chapman, who spoke to CBC the day before his first

surgery, says it’s worth trying.

The massage therapist says he could see just fine until he was 13 years old, when he took some ibuprofen after a school basketball game, triggering a rare auto-immune reaction known as Stevens-Johnson syndrome.

He was in a coma for 27 days, and had severe burns all over his body, including his eyes. His sight never fully recovered.

Over the last 20 years, he says he’s had about 50 surgeries, including 10 corneal implants. Sometimes, he says, they work for a few months. One restored partial vision for two whole years.

But, inevitably, he always loses his sight again.

“When I get it back, you know, it would be sort of this great rush,” he said. “Then I’d lose it again and it would be heartbreaking, and I sort of sank into this depression.”

Image Description: Doctors in blue surgical scrubs gather around a patient receiving tooth-in-eye surgery.

Image Caption: Doctors perform Canada’s first tooth-in-eye surgery on Gail Lane of Victoria, B.C., on Feb. 25, 2025, in Vancouver. Photo by Providence Health Care.

He’s hopeful these two surgeries at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital will be his last.

“I’ve been imagining myself, you know, playing basketball again and shooting hoops,” he said. “I’d like to travel more and, you know, just see the world.”

Moloney’s goal is to keep helping patients like Chapman in Canada by opening the country’s first OOKP clinic at Mount Saint Joseph.

The St. Paul’s Foundation charity has raised $430,000 to start the clinic and fund it for three years, after which the B.C. health agency Providence Health Care will fold it into its annual budget.

Dr. Samir Jabbour, an ophthalmologist at the Centre hospitalier de l’Université de Montréal, called the new clinic a “great opportunity for Canadian medicine.”

Jabbour, who was not involved in the B.C. surgeries, says there are very few cases in which a patient would require this kind of rare and complex surgery. But when it happens, they have to shoulder the cost of travelling outside the country.

“The fact that we have it now in Canada definitely makes it much easier for patient care,” he said.

Chapman says he’s incredibly grateful to Moloney and everyone else who made this possible.

“Hopefully, this’ll break some ground,” he said. “If there’s other people in Canada that maybe need this and it becomes, you know, an established thing here, I’d feel really great about that.”

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In The News

International Blind Ice Hockey Series Leads to Montreal for the First Time Ever!

By: Canadian National Blind Hockey Team

Earlier this year, the 2025 Canadian National Blind Hockey Team earned its sixth consecutive championship and defended its title against Team USA in Montreal, in partnership with Défi sportif AlterGo.

This year’s National Team featured 20 players representing seven different provinces spanning the country from BC to Newfoundland.

“We’re thrilled with the level of talent on the 2025 National Team and so proud of all the hard work these players put in to training to represent our country; it wasn’t an easy decision as the caliber of skill keeps levelling up,” explains GM of the Canadian National

Blind Hockey Team, Luca DeMontis. “We want to thank Défi sportif AlterGo for welcoming our organization to host our tournament during their 42nd celebration and we were happy to put on a great tournament for all the spectators in Montreal!”

This is the first time since 2011 that Blind Hockey was featured during Défi sportif AlterGo.

“During the sports first appearance at Defi sportif in 2010 leaders from across the then very small Blind Hockey community held the founding meeting for what would eventually become Canadian Blind Hockey,” explains Matt Morrow, Executive Director at Canadian Blind Hockey. “It’s incredible to be here 15 years later to celebrate the growth of the Para sport across Canada and around the world, and to be able to host the 6th International Blind Ice Hockey Series. Thank you to all our partners who have helped us get here, especially the CNIB Foundation, for supporting Blind

Hockey across Canada.”

The Para sport of Blind Hockey is played by athletes who are blind or partially sighted using an adapted puck that is larger than a traditional puck and makes noise. At the international level players must be classified under the same system used in the Paralympics and have 10% vision or less.

The Para sport is played in 13 cities across Canada as well as the USA, England, Finland, Sweden, and Russia. Currently only Canada and the USA have national teams however Canadian Blind Hockey is working with international partners to grow the game with the hopes of establishing a World Championship and creating a pathway to the Paralympics.

Image Description: Players on the Canadian National Blind Hockey Team in the midst of a game. Two players wear yellow jerseys while two others wear black jerseys. They are all in hot pursuit of the puck.

“The talent on this National Team is unmatched across the board and I’m proud of everyone for showing up and training hard this season,” said head Coach Paul Kerins. “This 2025 team is going to take this Para sport to the next level, and I was so excited to coach the players in Montreal.”

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Canadian Association of Optometrists Article

Eye issues aren’t always obvious

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) urges eye exams for children with a new awareness campaign.

By: Dr Allison Scott

President, Canadian Association of Optometrists

Image Description: A banner at the top of the page, accompanying the title text and byline. A young girl wearing a yellow sweater and pink glasses sits at her desk, strewn with books and craft supplies. She is rubbing her eyes in exhaustion.

Eyewise

Save your sight,

See your optometrist.

[GetEyeWise.com](http://geteyewise.com)

As we celebrate Children’s Vision Month, the CAO is launching a new digital awareness campaign to address children’s vision care and the rising epidemic of myopia.

Raising public awareness about the importance of

regular eye exams for early detection remains crucial to improving eye care outcomes for Canadians, from toddlers to seniors”, says Dr. Allison Scott, CAO President. “Unfortunately, eye health often doesn’t receive the same level of attention as other routine health care. Many parents assume they would know if their child was struggling to see, and children with vision problems are generally unaware of their condition, because they assume everyone sees the way they do”.

It is never too soon to see an optometrist!

The CAO recommends that parents schedule comprehensive eye exams for their children starting at six to nine months, then again between the ages of two and five years, and annually thereafter to age 19. After 19, eye development stabilizes, check-ups are recommended every two years for healthy adults with no known eye conditions. Routine eye exams are crucial, even if no symptoms are evident, to catch potential issues early and ensure timely intervention. Optometrists frequently encounter ‘invisible’ eye issues like amblyopia, colour deficiencies and problems with eye coordination, and even myopia. These aren’t rare, but they often go undetected because of lack of awareness. Parents are often surprised when we diagnose their child with an ocular issue. Reassuring them, explaining that these things aren’t always obvious, leads to a better understanding of the importance of regular comprehensive eye exams.

Many parents are also surprised to learn that optometrists regularly perform eye exams on infants as young as six months. Some assume a child needs to be able to read before an optometrist can do an eye exam. But while the exams for youngest patients look different than those for adults, they are highly informative. Optometrists detect, prevent and help manage visual impairments and congenital conditions that, if left untreated, can hinder visual development, motor skills, and even social interaction.

Fighting the Blur

Detecting conditions like myopia early on means taking measures right away to halt or slow the progression. Research shows that myopia (or nearsightedness) is occurring at earlier ages starting

in childhood (6-7 years of age) and progressing at a more rapid rate than the previous generations. This is concerning, given that high levels of myopia can lead to sight-threatening conditions, including retinal detachments, cataracts, glaucoma, and myopic

maculopathy. People with myopia will have trouble seeing distant objects, such as road signs, whiteboards, movie screens and TVs. Myopia has both a genetic and environmental component, including increased near work and screen time in children.

Focusing on prevention, early detection and timely treatment of vision problems set the foundation for lifelong eye health, and beyond. Maintaining good habits beyond the exam room will also help minimize the impact of vision conditions and eye diseases like myopia. Spending more time outdoors and limiting screen time are beneficial for healthy development, both for ocular health as well as overall health.

This month, we invite our community to boost public awareness about children’s vision care through a simple yet potent message:

Eye issues aren’t always obvious

To find more about the CAO’s next awareness campaign, please visit opto.ca or follow us on social media.

Logo: Canadian Association of Optometrists / Association Canadienne Des Optométristes

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In the News

This Darts League is a Bull’s‑Eye for Some in Windsor’s Blind Community

Organizers say, to their knowledge, they are the only blind darts league in Canada.

By: Katerina Georgieva, CBC News

A new darts league in Windsor, Ont., is bringing blind and partially sighted people together — offering both a sense of inclusion and joy.

“It gives all of us an opportunity to feel like we just belong,” said organizer Peter Best, a longtime disability advocate who is blind.

It started with a suggestion at the local Royal Canadian Legion Branch as they brainstormed possible activities for the local blind community, given that there aren’t many available to them, Best explained. “I said, ‘Why don’t we play darts?’ And they said, ‘Well- wait a minute. You’ve got blind, visually impaired people throwing sharp objects around a crowded room?’” Best chuckled.

“I said, ‘It sounds perfect.”

Best and fellow organizer Sharron Jarvis got the green light from the legion, which offered them complimentary use of the space, and started up the league earlier this year.

While there is a blind darts team in the United Kingdom, Best says that to his knowledge, the Windsor league is the only blind dart group in Canada.

The Windsor league has about nine players, and volunteer score keepers and guides who support the process. A volunteer will line up players who need guidance at the regular line eight feet away from the dart board, make sure they’re centred, facing the right direction, hand them the darts, and then make sure the area is clear before anyone throws the darts.

“We do it very safely... Nobody’s been injured and everybody keeps coming back,” Best said.

Best’s cousin Gary Best has been volunteering as a guide since the league began.

“I’ll tell you; they have improved since the beginning and they’re getting better,” he said, also pointing out that they’re using real darts, not plastic ones.

“They’re starting to hit the board really good now.”

They also compete in different categories based on how much vision different players have: B1 for individuals who are totally blind, B2 for those with light perception and some shadows, and B3 for those with partial sight.

Carole Beaulieu, one of the players who is blind and plays in the B1 category, says the league is all about “having fun.”

“I had never played darts before and I just thought that it would be a really nice social thing to do,” she said.

Beaulieu says she enjoys connecting with other individuals who have the same type of life skills and experiences that she has — and that the league has really filled a need since the pandemic because there hasn’t been much available in terms of community

activities for blind and partially sighted people.

“We still have something to offer and we’re enjoying it, and the legion has been so welcoming, so we just feel as if we belong,” she said.

It’s exactly that feeling of “camaraderie” that motivated Sharron Jarvis to work with Peter Best to help organize the league. Jarvis is legally blind with partial sight but can’t see detailed objects.

“It’s been a wonderful learning experience because we all have our coping mechanisms, and I’ve learned a lot through other people that have disabilities the same as I do, how to cope,” she said. “And so that’s been great.”

Best says it’s all about inclusion.

“It also demonstrates that when you have a disability, you know, you can find a way to get things done,” he said.

The group wrapped up its season in May but plans to start back up in the fall.

Image Description: Two men stand in their local Royal Canadian Legion Branch. The man on the right guides the arm of the man on the left, who is preparing to shoot a dart at a dartboard in front of him.

Image Caption: Gary Best (right) is pictured here guiding Peter Best (left) as he prepares to take a shot at the dart board. Photo by Katerina Georgieva, CBC.

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In The News

Ottawa’s Blind and Low-Vision Community Visits the Rideau Center to Test the GoodMaps App

By: Shelley Ann Morris, David Greene, and Nolan Jenikov.

Photos by: GoodMaps

Earlier this year, members of Ottawa’s Blind and Low‑Vision community had the opportunity to test the GoodMaps indoor navigation app at the CF Rideau Centre.

Navigation in large, multi-level shopping malls can be challenging for everyone, but particularly for those with visual impairments. This event provided valuable insights into how well the app functions for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

GoodMaps representatives, in collaboration with CCB and CNIB, invited participants to test the app and provide feedback on its accessibility and effectiveness.

Three staff members from the CCB took part in the testing, all of whom use VoiceOver on their iPhones. One participant, a low-vision user, also had high‑contrast mode enabled.

GoodMaps operates similarly to outdoor GPS but is designed for indoor use. To navigate, users hold their phone’s camera outward to ‘see’ the surroundings and receive turn-by-turn guidance. During the testing, representatives from GoodMaps and CNIB provided training and assistance, actively listening to feedback from participants to identify areas for improvement.

The app is user-friendly, with built-in tutorials that make it easy to get started. Users simply type the name of the store or service they are looking for, and the app provides a detailed map with step-by-step directions. An alphabetical directory makes it even easier to locate specific destinations within the mall.

For low-vision users, the app overlays green chevrons on the map for visual guidance, while VoiceOver provides spoken directions. One suggestion from testers was to increase the contrast of these chevrons to make them more visible. The app also offers precise guidance; if a user veers too far left, haptic feedback and VoiceOver alerts, such as “Eleven O’clock,” help them correct their course. A similar response occurs when veering too far right, with “One O’clock” providing auditory feedback.

A key feature of the app is ‘panning,’ which involves slowly moving the phone’s camera from left to right to help the app determine the user’s location and plan the best route. However, it is important to note that panning is only necessary at the beginning of a journey and infrequently during a trip if the app loses track of the user’s position.

Image Description: A woman with dark hair stands in front of a shop window. She holds a few shopping bags and her phone in her hand, which she stares at.

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In The News

GoodMaps App (continued)

GoodMaps includes a tutorial to assist users in mastering this essential function.

Accessibility for users with mobility challenges is also a priority. The app allows users to plan routes that avoid stairs and escalators, a feature that developers plan to make even more prominent and user-friendly.

One challenge encountered during testing was poor cellular reception in certain areas of the mall, requiring users to log in to the Rideau Centre’s Wi-Fi. Unfortunately, the login process was not fully accessible, highlighting the need for organizations to collaborate with the blind and low-vision community to ensure seamless access.

Safety concerns were also discussed. Holding a phone in an upright position for navigation may not be ideal in busy public spaces, where it could be bumped or knocked from the user’s hand. Additionally, those using white canes, guide dogs, or wheelchairs may find it difficult to hold their phone while navigating. Testers emphasized the need for creative hands-free solutions to enhance safety.

Overall, GoodMaps has the potential to greatly improve navigation at the CF Rideau Centre. For individuals with ‘tunnel vision,’ for example, locating a specific store while navigating can be extremely difficult. The app’s organized directory reduces the need for aimless searching and allows users to discover new shops and services they might otherwise miss.

A User’s Perspective – David’s Experience:

As someone with only light perception, I found GoodMaps both helpful and intriguing. The Rideau Centre is a place where I typically struggle to navigate independently. During testing, I successfully located three different destinations on separate floors without difficulty.

However, I did notice that the app consumes significant battery power, especially when holding the phone vertically and using the panning feature. Additionally, in crowded areas, there is a risk of the phone being knocked from my hand. I would recommend gathering as much information as possible before starting a journey and using the app only when necessary to conserve battery life. Despite these concerns, I highly recommend GoodMaps for situations where navigation is particularly challenging or when no other options are available.

A User’s Perspective – Nolan’s Experience:

As a wheelchair user who is also blind, I found GoodMaps to be both highly accurate and very useful. However, I quickly realized that having a strong cellular or Wi-Fi connection is essential, as the app constantly checks the visual information gathered from the phone’s camera against its online map while navigating. This means that users may need to plan ahead and ensure a stable connection, particularly in areas with poor reception.

I was particularly interested in how GoodMaps’ feature that avoids steps would work for wheelchair users. While I anticipate a positive experience, I am eager to hear from others in the community about how well this feature functions in practice and whether they encounter any challenges.

Overall, I was very excited to try out GoodMaps, and I believe it shows a lot of promise. I highly encourage others to test it and share their feedback. To further practice using the app, I plan to visit the mall during a less busy time to refine my navigation skills.

One consideration I need to explore further is how to carry my phone while navigating. Since both of my hands are occupied when moving, I may need a good chest mount to hold my phone securely. However, I also want to ensure that I can still feel the haptic vibrations from the app, as these provide crucial feedback—such as when I veer off course or when the absence of vibrations confirms that I am on the correct path.

GoodMaps is currently available for use at the CF Rideau Centre and its LRT station. We encourage members of the community to try it out and share their experiences!

Image Description: A close up of someone holding their phone in their hand.

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Canadian Council of the Blind Article

Vision Without Borders

Reflections from the 2025 World Blindness Summit

By: Louise Gillis, Immediate Past President, Canadian Council of the Blind.

São Paulo, Brazil | September 1–5, 2025

As the vibrant city of São Paulo welcomed delegates from over 190 countries, the 11th World Blind Union (WBU) General Assembly and World Blindness Summit became a powerful testament to global unity, advocacy, and progress. Representing the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), Leslie Yee (First Vice President) and I had the privilege of attending this landmark event, which marked the beginning of CCB’s 2025–2026 season with renewed purpose and insight.

A Global Gathering for Change

The World Blind Union continues to challenge stereotypes, dismantle barriers, and amplify the voices of blind and partially sighted individuals worldwide. This year’s summit was no exception. From plenary sessions to grassroots forums, the event showcased the diversity of lived experiences and the collective drive to improve quality of life for people with vision loss.

Women’s Forum: Building a Manifesto for Equity

Sunday afternoon featured two parallel forums: the Women’s Forum and the Youth Forum. While two young CNIB interns participated in the Youth Forum, Leslie and I attended the Women’s Forum, where we each moderated discussion groups—Leslie opened the day, and I closed it.

Organized and chaired by Diane Bergeron (CNIB), Chair of the WBU Women’s Committee, the forum adopted a horizontal, experience-based format. Rather than rigid thematic blocks, the agenda prioritized the territorial and personal contexts of participants. This approach fostered deep listening, collaborative construction, and political advocacy.

With over 190 registered participants—a record turnout—the forum culminated in the drafting of a manifesto. This document, rich with insights and recommendations, will guide the Women’s Committee’s work over the next four years to elevate the status of blind and low-vision women globally. It wasn’t just about visibility—it was about building lasting change.

Image Description: Conference attendees. A crowd of delegates network in a brightly lit conference room.

Image caption: Delegates at the 2025 World Blindness Summit.

Image Description: Louise Gillis stands outside with a group of other WBU attendees. They are waiting outside a lit up restaurant in the evening.

Opening Ceremony: Culture and Connection

Sunday evening’s opening ceremony set the tone with heartfelt remarks and lively Brazilian entertainment, celebrating the spirit of inclusion and international collaboration.

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Plenary Highlights: Braille, AI, and Climate Action

From Monday to Wednesday, the summit featured a dynamic mix of plenary and concurrent sessions. The first plenary, “200 Years of the Braille System: From Slate to Display,” explored the evolution of braille and its integration with artificial intelligence and assistive technologies. Speakers emphasized that tactile literacy remains essential for empowerment, independence, and employment.

Another standout session focused on humanitarian emergency readiness. Moderated by Diane Bergeron, panelists from Denmark, South Africa, Ukraine, and the United States discussed climate change, environmental disasters, and inclusive strategies to ensure that visually impaired individuals are not left behind during crises.

Concurrent Sessions: A Wealth of Knowledge

Leslie and I strategically attended different concurrent sessions to maximize our learning. Topics ranged from:

* Turning global commitments into local realities
* Cultural accessibility as a universal right
* Maximizing inclusion for people with low vision
* Employment for all
* Blindness, intersectionality, and diversity
* Technology and innovation
* Health and visual impairment

The summit also included games and entertainment for non-delegates, and a bustling exhibition hall showcasing the latest in accessible tech and services.

General Assembly: Leadership and Elections

The official WBU General Assembly ran Thursday through Friday, with 420 delegates participating either in person or online. Elections were conducted via paper ballot and digital platforms to accommodate all attendees.

Meet the 2025–2029 WBU Table Officers:

President

Santosh Kumar Rungta, India

First Vice President

Cristina Chamorro, Spain

Second Vice President

Yaw Ofori-Debra, Ghana

Secretary General

Moises Bauer Luiz, Brazil

Treasurer

Alejandro Antonio Paz Ambrosio, Guatemala

Immediate Past President

Martine Abel-Williamson, New Zealand

Image Description: A man stands under a brightly striped umbrella. He is vending in front of a colourful mural, selling an array of clothing.

Image Caption: A vendor on the street of São Paulo stands by his clothing rack.

Image Description: A selfie of Louise Gillis, Leslie Yee, and other WBU attendees. They are formally dressed and smiling widely.

Image Caption: A selfie of Louise Gillis, Leslie Yee, and other WBU attendees.

While we were disappointed that Canada’s nominee, Diane Bergeron, narrowly missed election as President—possibly due to timing changes and technical issues—we remain proud of her leadership and advocacy.

A Week of Connection and Purpose

Despite some logistical challenges, the summit was an unforgettable experience. Leslie and I were inspired by the passion and resilience of our global peers. We reconnected with old friends, forged new relationships, and returned home with fresh ideas and renewed commitment.

Our Canadian team was incredibly supportive throughout the week, and we look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to improve the lives of blind and partially sighted individuals across Canada and beyond.

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CNIB Article

Image Description: A young baby receives their first eye exam. They sit giggling in their parent’s lap as an optometrist fits them with some trial frames.

Why Every Child Deserves a Head Start

The Case for Mandatory Eye Exams in Ontario

By: Suzanne Decary, Senior VP of Programs at CNIB

When you think about what a child needs to thrive in school, you probably picture pencils, backpacks, and a lunchbox. But what about healthy eyes?

Research tells us that 80% of learning in the classroom is visual, yet in 2023, only 7% of four-year-olds and 8% of five-year-olds had a comprehensive eye exam, despite exams being fully covered by OHIP for anyone under 19. Every year, approximately 123,000 children enroll in junior kindergarten in Ontario, and studies show that 10% of these children will need glasses.

That means thousands of children are entering school without knowing if they can see the blackboard, read a book, or follow along with the class. And undetected vision problems don’t just affect grades. Undetected sight loss can influence a child’s social development, self-esteem, and even future job opportunities.

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This fight is about creating a future where vision care is recognized as essential, and where no child has to struggle simply because they can’t see clearly.

The Solution? Start Early, Check Often.

CNIB, alongside the Canadian Association of Optometrists and other partners, is calling for our education and health systems to enact policy that strongly encourages:

* First eye exam at 6 months
* Another between ages 2 and 4, before starting school
* Annual exams every year after age 5

This isn’t just about a quick screening. It’s about a continuum of care — making sure children who need treatment get it, and that no one falls through the cracks.

To make this vision a reality, bolder policy will help. CNIB is advocating for:

1. **Pediatric care that promotes vision health.** Primary care providers should talk about eye health and encourage eye exams at every stage — newborn, pre-school, and school-age.
2. **School checklists that include eye exams.** Just like vaccines and dental checks, parents should see an eye exam on their school’s registration and back-to-school checklists.
3. **Redirecting screening dollars**. Instead of funding outdated vision screenings in schools, let’s invest in public awareness campaigns that promote comprehensive eye exams.
4. **Modernized health records.** As Ontario moves toward digital vaccine cards, add eye exams to the online record so vision care becomes part of every child’s health journey.

Parents, Partners, and Advocates Agree

Healthcare and education leaders are standing with us:

*“Eye exams performed before school begins can spot problems that might otherwise remain hidden, impacting a child’s academic progress and social development.”*

— Ottawa Network for Education

*“By embedding regular eye examinations into early childhood assessments, this will help close the gaps in vision care and increase public awareness.*”

— Canadian Ophthalmological Society

Ontario has a chance to lead the country, but we’re not starting from scratch. British Columbia launched a 2025 pilot program delivering free, comprehensive eye exams — and free glasses if needed — directly in schools. Quebec runs the *À l’école de la vue* program, offering vision screenings for all kindergarten children, even in remote regions. And in the U.S., states like Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri already require proof of an eye exam before school entry.

A Clear Future for Ontario’s Kids

By making eye exams a standard part of early childhood health, Ontario can ensure every child walks into the classroom ready to learn, to play, and to thrive. For children living with sight loss — and for the entire CNIB community — this fight is about creating a future where vision care is recognized as essential, and where no child has to struggle simply because they can’t see clearly.

Logo: CNIB

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Hoffman-LaRoche Editorial

Logo: Roche

Image Description: Two circular photos side by side. The leftmost is of a vibrant blue iris, with a light green ring around the pupil. The rightmost is a woman with sandy hair. She leans against a storefront, holding in her hands a book. She looks off into the distance.

Is wet AMD disrupting life’s best moments?

There are solutions that can help. Talk to your ophthalmologist. Visit [www.VisionCanContinue.ca](http://www.visioncancontinue.ca)

Image Description: QR code linking to [www.VisionCanContinue.ca](http://www.visioncancontinue.ca)

If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact Roche at 1-800-561-1759.

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[precleared.ca](http://precleared.ca)

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Hoffman-LaRoche Editorial

Image Description: A man in a blue shirt sits in the foreground. He is covering one of his eyes and staring at an Amsler grid, held by an ophthalmologist wearing a white coat.

Shining a Light on AMD

Addressing Awareness, Early Detection, and Resources for Vision Health in Canada

Changes in vision should never be ignored, as even minor differences can be an early sign of eye disease. However, for conditions like Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD), vision loss and other symptoms can often go initially unnoticed. AMD is one of the leading causes of vision loss in Canada in people over 55, with 2.5 million Canadians currently living with the condition. Coupled with an aging population, the prevalence of AMD is projected to rise significantly to an estimated 4.2 million by 2050. Recognizing the importance of early detection and proactive care is crucial in combating this growing public health challenge.

AMD impacts central vision, making everyday tasks, such as driving, reading, or facial recognition, more challenging. It has two types: dry and wet AMD. When someone ages, the macula—a key part of the retina responsible for central vision, gets thinner. In Dry AMD, this thinning can cause fat deposits called drusen to build up and damage the eye. In Wet AMD, this may result in abnormal blood vessels that burst, leaking blood and leading to vision loss. Of the two types, Dry AMD is typically more

widespread and less severe than its wet counterpart.

A recent study shed light on the substantial challenges faced by individuals with AMD, revealing that a majority (60–80%) of participants reported difficulty with routine activities such as reading, driving, and personal care. AMD can have a significant emotional toll on those diagnosed with it, often leading to feelings of fear, frustration, or exhaustion due to the loss of independence. In fact, more than half of those with AMD reported experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation related to their condition.

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75% of all vision loss and blindness can be prevented or treated if diagnosed early.

More awareness around AMD is needed among Canadians

Adding to the emotional toll that can come with AMD is the challenge of accessing important information about treatment options. A recent Canadian survey of people with wet AMD and their caregivers found that fewer than half (47%) of caregivers are aware of new treatments for AMD, compared to 64% of patients. This highlights a substantial gap in treatment awareness that needs to be addressed. In addition, nearly 80% of patients and caregivers affected by AMD agreed that more awareness and attention should be given to wet AMD and its treatments. As some people with the condition may feel uncomfortable or unprepared to discuss their condition or treatment options with healthcare professionals, it is important for people to have the right tools in their back pocket, so they can feel empowered to have conversations about their vision health with their doctor.

Caregivers can play a crucial role in helping people with AMD navigate their eye care journey, but also assist with things like attending appointments and managing their daily activities. In fact, 70% of those with AMD reported that they relied on someone else’s assistance with these tasks in the past month.

Resources and guidance for people living

with vision loss

Despite gaps in awareness around available treatment options, there is hope. The good news is that 75% of all vision loss and blindness can be prevented or treated if diagnosed early. However, this requires being proactive about vision care through regular eye check ups and monitoring for vision changes. Lack of education and awareness about eye diseases and treatment options is a key gap which creates challenges for Canadians with AMD.

For those recently diagnosed with AMD or other eye conditions, having the right information is key to navigating your eye health journey. Whether you’re seeking tips on how to best prepare for your appointment, or searching for additional resources to enhance your understanding of your eye health, you can visit www.EyeHealthMatters.com to help you navigate your eye care journey. Here are just some of the key resources available on the website:

* Diabetic Retinopathy (DR): A Quick Guide
* Pan-Retinal Photocoagulation (PRP): A Quick Guide
* Age-Related Macular Degeneration: A Quick Guide
* Eye Injections: A Quick Guide
* Preparing for Your Ophthamologist Visit: A Quick Guide
* Retinal Vein Occlusion (RVO): A Quick Guide
* Resources and Support for People with an Eye Disease
* Transportation Resources Guide

If you would like to feel more prepared for your next visit to your ophthalmologist, but are unsure of what questions to discuss, here are a few helpful questions to guide your conversation:

1. What options exist for my wet AMD?
2. What can I do to maximize my vision?
3. How can I better manage my condition?

It’s essential to have open and ongoing conversations with your eye care professional about your vision health. If you notice any changes in your vision, don’t hesitate to reach out and speak with them. Early action and proactive communication are crucial steps in maintaining your eye health and quality of life.

This article is sponsored by Hoffman-La Roche Limited (Roche Canada).

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Canadian Council of the Blind Canadian Vision Stakeholders and Friends Appreciation

Canadian Vision Stakeholders

Partenaires canadiens de la vision

BALANCE for Blind Adults

Canadian Association of Optometrists. Association canadienne des optométristes.

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Association canadienne des ergochécapeutes.

Canadian Glaucoma Society. Société Candienne de Glaucome.

Canadian Ophthalmological Society. Société canadienne d’ophtalmologie.

CNIB Foundation. la Fondation INCA.

Diabetes Canada.

Fighting Blindness Canada. Vaincre la cécité Canada.

International Federation on Ageing.

Opticians Association of Canada. Association des opticiens du Canada.

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada. Réadaptation en déficience visuelle Canada.

Friends of the Canadian Council of the Blind.

Amis du Conseil canadien des aveugles.

Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians.

Capital Hill Group.

Engage Interactive.

Keith Communications Inc.

Lions International.

National Educational Association of Disabled Students.

OCAD University.

The Ottawa Curling Club.

Skyfly Productions.

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Braille Literacy Canada Article

Image Description: A person wearing a brown knit sweater sits with a large bound braille book in their lap. They run their hand across the page as they read.

Braille Literacy Canada

Canada’s Braille Authority

For many Canadians who are blind or with low vision, braille is the key to literacy and independence. Braille is for the blind, what print is for the sighted. Braille Literacy Canada educates and advocates for equitable and timely access to high-quality braille for those who are blind, DeafBlind, or who have low vision. We believe in a world where braille is universally acknowledged, respected, accessible, and integrated into every facet of society.

Come join us! Being a member gives you a voice in our work,

and access to tools to help you advocate for access to braille.

Visit [brailleliteracycanada.ca/en/membership](http://brailleliteracycanada.ca/en/membership)

For more information visit our website: [www.brailleliteracycanada.ca](http://www.brailleliteracycanada.ca) or email us at [info@blc-lbc.ca](mailto:info@blc-lbc.ca)

Logo: Braille Literacy Canada

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Back Page

Astellas Advertisement

Image Description: The back page is divided into two frames. The left frame shows a blurred view of a hand holding a photograph, but little to no details are visible. There is white text above it but we can not tell what it is. The right frame shows the in-focus version. Someone holds a black and white photo of a couple walking. There is a pile of old photos in the background. Bold white text reads:

Every day of lost vision is one too many.

Sight is our window to the world. It connects us, guides, and inspires us. At Astellas, we are committed to researching advanced eye diseases such as geographic atrophy.

Logo: Astellas

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