



## Media Release

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For Immediate Release

### **Change the Life of Someone Who Is Blind With a Visit to your Local Library**

#### **CNIB Foundation partners with CULC/CBUC to bring Phone It Forward to public library system**

TORONTO – March 12, 2019 – CNIB Foundation has partnered with CULC/CBUC (Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada) to bring their **Phone It Forward** Program to participating local libraries across Canada.

**Phone It Forward** is the first program of its kind worldwide that refurbishes used smartphones, putting them directly in the hands of people with sight loss to transform lives. For people who are blind, smartphones are a game-changer – a portable, all-in-one communications and accessibility solution. In the hands of someone who is blind, a smartphone becomes more than most people can imagine – a critical tool that opens a world of opportunity and independence.

However, for too many, they are out of reach. Forty-six per cent of Canadians who are blind don't own a smartphone – or not one that's advanced enough to assist them in daily living. The unemployment rate for persons with sight loss is triple the Canadian average, making affording a mobile device difficult for many.

“Desk drawers across Canada are full of old smartphones not being used,” said Angela Bonfanti, Vice-President, CNIB Foundation. “Many Canadians own multiple phones, regularly upgrading to a newer model. Let's get those phones into the hands of people in our community who need them. Partnering with public libraries makes it simple and convenient for anyone to pick up a donation envelope and mail in their used phones.”

“This is a natural partnership opportunity with CNIB Foundation given the strong relationship with the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and public libraries who deliver service to Canadians with print disabilities,” said Jefferson Gilbert, Executive Director, CULC/CBUC. “Our public library members are very enthusiastic about bringing the Phone It Forward project to their patrons and community members.”

Wiped and refurbished smartphones are loaded with new accessible apps specifically designed to benefit someone with sight loss. They can then be used for a multitude of day-to-day tasks that many of us take for granted, including navigating with GPS, identifying colours and faces, reading printed text, confirming correct medications and accessing live video assistance from a sighted volunteer. From school to work to home to life in the community, smartphones empower people with sight loss with unprecedented levels of information and independence.

Help change what it is to be blind today. Visit [phoneitforward.ca](http://phoneitforward.ca) for a list of participating libraries (excluding Quebec) under the “Get An Envelope” section, then visit your local library branch to pick up a **Phone It Forward** postage-paid envelope and donate your used smartphone(s). Your donation will support Canadians with sight loss in your community.

### **About CNIB**

Celebrating 100 years in 2018, CNIB is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams while tearing down barriers to inclusion. Our work is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast. To learn more or get involved, visit [cnib.ca](http://cnib.ca).

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