Access Changes Everything

Communication, belonging, impact

CNIB
DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY SERVICES



Annual Report 2025 • 2026

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2025-26: Our Impact Adds Up

Access Changes Everything

Behind every number is a person who gained greater independence, stronger communication, or a deeper sense of belonging.

Clients Served

- Ontario: **168**
- Saskatchewan: **18**
- British Columbia: **46**
- **Total: 232**

Direct Service Hours

- Ontario: **65,943**
- Saskatchewan: **3,564**
- British Columbia: **5,735**
- **Total: 75,242**

Skills Development Program

- **74** learners served
- Government target: **49**
- **100%** customer satisfaction
- **93%** service coordination
- **79%** learner progress

> “Intervenor services make a huge difference in my life. Without them, how would I go places? How would I do things?”
>
> — **Barbara**, DBCS client


EMERGENCY
RELEASE
ABRIGO

Letter from the CEO and Board Chair

Safety. Independence. Connection. Belonging. The ability to be heard, and understood. The freedom to communicate.

These are fundamental human rights, not luxuries.

For people who are Deafblind, access to the rights many take for granted can shape every aspect of daily life.

At CNIB Deafblind Community Services, we believe access changes everything, and we know it does not happen by accident. That means working diligently to remove barriers and create opportunities for connection, participation, and independence.

This work is about far more than services and programs. It is about ensuring people have the support they need to make choices, build relationships, and live the lives they choose.

Throughout this report, you will meet some of the remarkable individuals who make this work so meaningful. Their experiences remind us that when access exists, possibilities expand. Connections deepen. And fundamental human rights are realized.

We expanded our Skills Development program, supporting more learners in building the skills needed for greater independence. We advanced communication access advocacy by amplifying the voices of people who are Deafblind.

We continue to invest in workforce sustainability, strengthening the intervenor expertise that helps people engage more fully in their communities.

None of this would be possible without the people at the heart of this work. To the individuals who are Deafblind, thank you for your trust, leadership, and partnership. To the families, staff, volunteers, funders, and community partners who walk alongside us, thank you for helping create a more accessible and inclusive future.

Access changes everything. Together, we're making it possible.

With deepest gratitude,

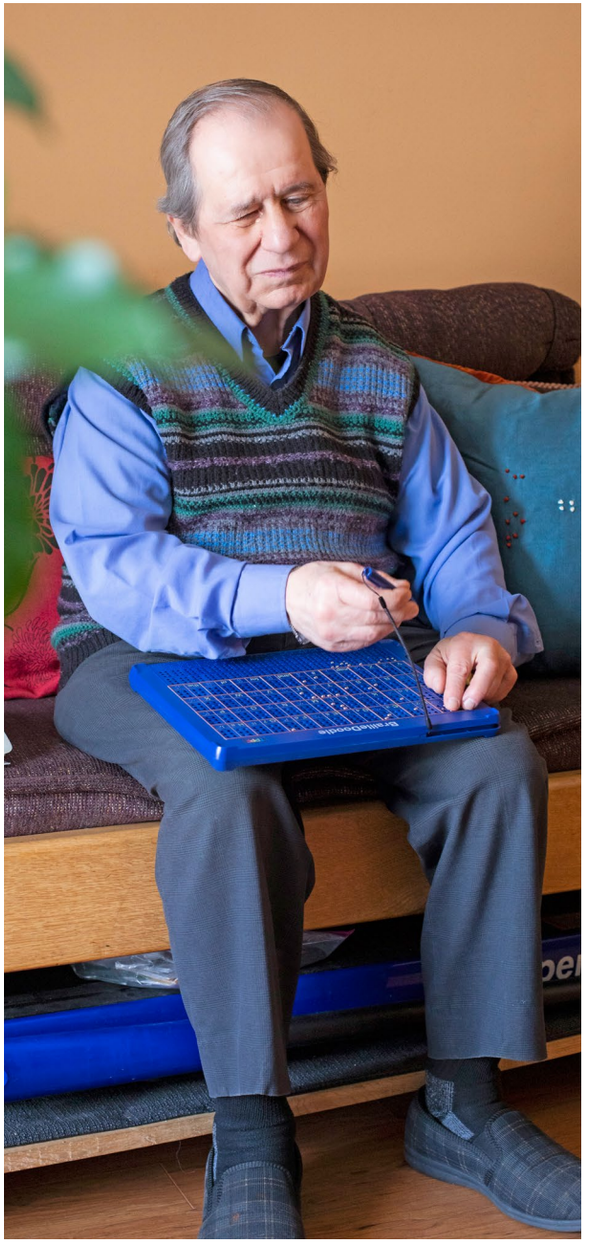


Angela Bonfanti
CEO, CNIB & DBCS



Maryann Everett
Board Chair, DBCS


DEAF-BLIND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES



The Right to Communicate

Skills Development: Access In Action, Independence In Motion

Our Skills Development Program provides personalized support that helps learners build confidence and independence. Technology-enabled tools are one part of that journey, but the true impact comes from human connection and support.

Program results were strong in 2025-26, with even greater impact ahead:

- **74** learners registered against a Government target of 49
- Ottawa: **13** learners
- Toronto: **20** learners
- Hamilton: **18** learners
- London: **23** learners
- **100%** customer satisfaction
- **93%** service coordination
- **79%** learner progress

These outcomes represent more than program success. They represent people across Canada participating more fully in the moments that make up everyday life. That is something we can all celebrate.

"The training was clear, patient, and easy to follow. I left feeling more confident using my iPhone on my own."

– **Alex Itenson**, Webinar participant, Hamilton, Ontario



The Right to Belong

Deafblind Week At Lake Joe: A Week Shaped By Shared Experience

"It was wonderful company. Everyone was there for the same reason. We all learned something from each other."

– **John**, participant during Deafblind-Only Adult Week

CNIB Lake Joe is Canada's only accessible overnight camp for people with sight loss. Established in 1961 on the spectacular shores of Lake Joseph, it is a place where recreation, learning, and community thrive in a fully accessible environment.

2025 marked the first Deafblind-Only Week at Lake Joe. Participants arrived to a space designed for independence and adventure.





Belonging emerged naturally. DBCS staff described the week as one defined by connection. They noted that "laughter was constant" and that friendships formed quickly.

Activities included sailing, bowling, nature walks, tandem biking, and magical campfire moments. Each created opportunities to build confidence through lived experience rather than instruction.

At Lake Joe, people don't just take part, they discover what it feels like to belong fully.



The Right to be Heard

Where You Live Should Not Shape Access

A person's ability to communicate should not depend on where they live, but be supported consistently everywhere. The stories of Mike, Kashmere, and Kazim show what happens when that is not yet the reality.

In British Columbia, we continue to advance our advocacy efforts, respond to growing demand for services, raise awareness through Deafblind Awareness Month activities, and engage government partners to strengthen access to intervenor support.

Mike: The Hidden Cost of Inaccessible Living

Mike is an IT professional in his 50s based on Vancouver Island living with Usher Syndrome, which leads to progressive vision and hearing loss. After losing his job due to declining vision, he has been adjusting to major shifts in his everyday life while moving through a time of uncertainty.

Without consistent access to support, including intervenor services and vision rehabilitation, everyday mobility and communication have become increasingly difficult. He is spending more time at home and is increasingly isolated.

DBCS turns advocacy into action: Access to essential supports can be the difference between isolation and independence. Through advocacy, CNIB Deafblind Community Services works to ensure no one is left behind. In 2025, we helped rally more than 1,000 voices to protect vital intervenor services in B.C.



Kashmere: Independence Under Strain

Accessing text, using technology, and moving safely through her community now often requires support. Based on Vancouver Island, she is experiencing growing isolation as her world narrows. Kashmere's experience highlights how loss of communication access reshapes not just independence, but connection to others.

DBCS brings community voices to decision-makers: We ensure the experiences of people who are Deafblind help inform government decisions and shape more inclusive policies and services. Our national consultation process engaged 1,300+ participants through 45 community conversations.

Kazim: Isolation Without Access

Kazim is a Deaf American Sign Language (ASL) user in his 70s who is experiencing vision loss due to optic nerve damage. After a period of homelessness, he now lives in a supportive living environment that provides housing and meals. Despite this stability, he has no access to ASL communication support and has become largely isolated in his room for over a year. Access to intervenor services would be essential in restoring participation in daily life.

DBCS builds a more connected future: we are working to ensure people who are Deafblind have access to the intervenor services they need through research, advocacy, and collaboration. More than 660,000 Canadians over age 15 live with both seeing and hearing disabilities, underscoring the need for accessible communication supports.



Access Meets Advocacy

Advocacy Efforts

We advocate for communication access as a human right, advancing recognition of Deafblind needs within provincial systems.

Awareness Month Activities

During Deafblind Awarenss Month in June, we share lived experience and engage the public to highlight the importance of communication access.

Government Engagement

We work with the provincial government to support funding and strengthen access to intervenor services as essential infrastructure.

Waitlist Pressures in B.C.

Rising demand for intervenor services reflects increased awareness and referrals, highlighting the need to expand capacity and ensure timely access.



The People Behind The Impact

Kerry G. Wadman Award: Celebrating Leadership In Deafblind Services

The Kerry G. Wadman Award recognizes the intervenors, specialists, managers, and staff whose skill and care make communication access possible every day. It celebrates excellence and the trust at the heart of intervenor services. This year, DBCS received a record 57 nominations, recognizing 38 staff members across Canada. Nearly half of the nominations came from clients. The number of nominations reflects the extraordinary relationships DBCS staff build every day with people who are Deafblind.

Congratulations to Marie Mulvihill

We're pleased to name Marie as the 2026 Kerry G. Wadman Award recipient, recognized for more than two decades of extraordinary service with CNIB Deafblind Community Services. Across multiple regions and provinces, she has supported clients through moments of change, challenge, and growth. Early in her career, Marie served as an intervenor supporting Kerry Wadman himself, a connection that reflects the legacy of this award. Known for her leadership, professionalism, innovation, and steadiness under pressure, she embodies the dedication that makes access possible every day.



Looking Ahead

Building a Future Grounded in Rights and Access

Access to communication, information, choice and community participation is a fundamental human right.

As we look ahead, DBCS will continue working to remove barriers and strengthen the people, partnerships and systems that help people who are Deafblind exercise those rights fully.

Strengthen Our Workforce

Invest in the skilled intervenor workforce that makes communication access, choice and participation possible.

Expand Equitable Access

Advocate for sustainable services so access to essential intervenor support does not depend on where someone lives.

Advance Innovation

Explore accessible technology, training and new approaches that strengthen communication, independence and choice.

Amplify Deafblind Voices

Ensure people who are Deafblind are at the centre of decisions, services and systems that affect their lives.

Our vision is a future where every person who is Deafblind has the access, choice and opportunity to participate fully in their community.





Governance & Board of Directors

Guiding a More Accessible Future

CNIB Deafblind Community Services leadership brings together people from across Canada who share a commitment to advancing access and inclusion for people who are Deafblind. Many members also bring lived experience, adding insight that shapes governance, priorities, and decision-making across our organization.

Board Leadership

Maryann Everett, **Chair**
Ron Kruzeniski, **Vice-Chair**
Jane Ashford, **Treasurer**

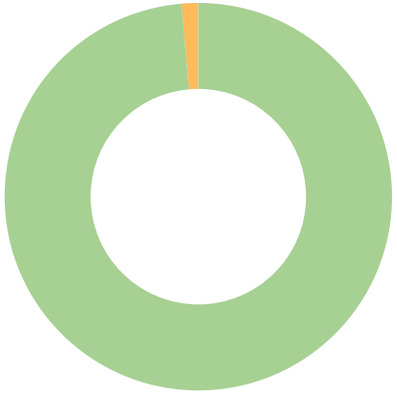
Directors

Carrie Anton
Denise Beaumont
David Bryane
Nora Constas
Katherine Hesson-Bolton
Ella Huang
Kathryn Jung
Penny Leclair
Arvind Mohandoss
Charlie Thompson
Sousie Weston



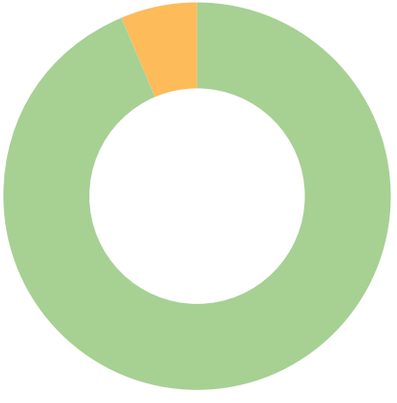
Investing in Impact

Operating Revenue



- Government Funding **98.7%**
- Other **1.3%**

Operating Expenses



- Service **92.2%**
- Administration **7.8%**

CNIB Deafblind Community Services is committed to transparency, accountability and responsible stewardship. Support is managed carefully and directed toward meaningful impact in the lives of people who are Deafblind. Full financial statements are audited annually by Ernst & Young LLP.

Thanks for Making Access Possible

At CNIB Deafblind Community Services, everything begins with people. Those who are Deafblind, their families, intervenors, staff, funders, partners, and advocates. Each contributes to communication access, independence, and the removal of barriers that limit connection and participation. We are deeply grateful for this shared commitment and the impact it makes every day.



CNIB, CNIB Deafblind Community Services, and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada are working closer together to make support easier to navigate. The aim is simple: help people who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision—and their families—get to the right services right when they need them.



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

Stronger Together

Together, we support and stand by Canadians who are blind, Deafblind or have low vision.

Visit **deafblindservices.ca**

Email **infoweb@deafblindservices.ca**

Call **1-855-862-6001**

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