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# Policy Matters: Kat Clarke

By Kat Clarke

*Later this year, Canadians will vote in the 43rd federal election. Many non-profit organizations, networks, and coalitions see elections as a critical opportunity to raise relevant public policy issues. Recently, the rules for charities engaging in public policy have become a prominent source of debate and discussion in government and the sector. As we countdown to the next election, The Philanthropist will be asking non-profit leaders what public policy issues are top of mind for them.*

**Name and organization:** Kat Clarke, CNIB Foundation

## **What current election issues might impact your work?**

Federal parties often focus on the economy and job creation: more jobs, better jobs. A job is so much more than just a paycheque: it's a means to self-reliance, a source of identity and pride, and a gateway to a brighter future. At CNIB, we are committed to accessible jobs. Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have a full-time employment rate of 28% – one of the most underemployed groups in the country. To boost participation in the world of work, Canadians with sight loss must have access to assistive technology. We're also campaigning for more inclusive work spaces.

## **What issues would you like to bring more attention to in the election?**

Technology can level the playing field for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted – especially in the workplace – but only when it's accessible, available, and affordable. CNIB wants to ensure Canadians with sight loss have access to affordable data plans, reliable broadband internet and assistive technology. Through our Re-Vision ADP (Assistive Devices Program) campaign in Ontario, we're advocating for a modernized program (it hasn't been updated in 20 years). CNIB's Phone It Forward program is putting smartphones in the hands of Canadians with sight loss, but it's not enough. The government must play a stronger role in providing assistive technology.

## **Where can we learn more about these issues?**

CNIB's advocacy campaigns

CNIB's Come to Work campaign

CNIB's Phone it Forward campaign