

**SPEAKING NOTES  
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA  
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION FOR CNIB  
(THE CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND)**

**256-S, OTTAWA  
MAY 2, 2013**

Senator Seth,

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,

Ms. Beaumont,

Ms. Bergeron,

Mr. Oliver,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Parliament and to this magnificent room which was originally the meeting place for the Senate Banking and Commerce Committee, where we are gathered today to learn a bit about the work of the CNIB - the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Ms. Jane Beaumont, Chair of the CNIB National Board of Directors, and Ms. Diane Bergeron, Director of Government Relations are here today on behalf of the organization. Senator Asha Seth is also a member of the Board of Directors.

The CNIB was first formed in 1918 when it became apparent that something needed to be done for soldiers returning to Canada who had been blinded in the First World War. That was not a small undertaking and it had the beneficial effect of creating an organization which evolved into Canada's primary provider of vision rehabilitation services.

There are two primary focal points for the CNIB: eliminating avoidable sight loss and ensuring Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to have fulfilling and enjoyable lives.

Parliament has been a partner in this endeavour, having enacted legislation in a number of areas to assist those living with vision loss. This includes permitting works protected under the *Copyright Act* to be reproduced in an accessible format, such as Braille or audio books. CNIB also worked hard to ensure that section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* governing equality rights included a provision to prevent discrimination on the basis of mental or physical disability.

Large numbers of Canadians are blind or partially sighted, and a significant loss of vision also affects family and friends. With an aging population, it is perhaps no surprise that the numbers are increasing. It is important that they have access to the vital vision health rehabilitation services offered by the CNIB that improve their quality of life.

From the CNIB Library which circulates more than 2.2 million accessible items each year, to funding research aimed at understanding the causes of particular eye diseases, to providing practical and emotional support services, the CNIB has been proving its value every day. The organization also acts as a national voice for people who are blind and partially sighted.

No matter the cause, loss of vision changes the lives of those affected. Our society owes a debt to CNIB and the work they do every day. Senator Seth and Mrs. Joy Smith, Member of Parliament for Kildonan – St. Paul, each plan to give recognition to this noble undertaking with statements in their respective chambers this afternoon.

In conclusion, I want to wish the Canadian National Institute for the Blind continued success and thank all those whose continuing commitment makes it possible.