

Exton, Adam (HC/SC)

From: Robert McCreight <RMcCreight@capitalhill.ca>
Sent: 2020-03-19 9:13 AM
To: Bélair, Thierry (HC/SC); Saini, Sabina (HC/SC); Nowers, Kathryn (HC/SC)
Subject: Re: Urgent Request for Vital Information (COVID-19 and Canadians with Seeing Disabilities)

Good morning Thierry, Sabina, and Kathryn,

I hope you're all doing well during these difficult times.

I wanted to circle back on the below inquiry and see if you happen to have had a chance to check on some of the questions the CCB and its partners in the seeing disability community have. I've included them again following my email, for reference.

We didn't see anything in yesterday's announcement regarding people with disabilities, so I was hoping you might be able to point me in the right direction on where to find some information.

For your awareness, I've also sent this inquiry to the Public Health Agency of Canada and Minister Qualtrough's office, although the following article mentions that ***"A spokeswoman for Disability Inclusion Minister Carla Qualtrough said some government staff from the department of social development have transferred to the Ministry of Health on an interim basis to provide more guidance on supporting disabled Canadians."***

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/disabled-canadians-feel-excluded-from-covid-19-messaging-1.4857691>

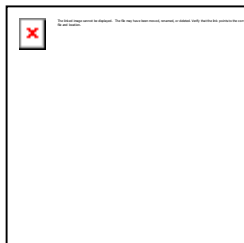
I know things are quite busy at this point in time, but any guidance you could provide on who I can speak with on this would be greatly appreciated.

Many thanks,
Robert

The big questions that come to mind are the following:

- Are there efforts being done to ensure that COVID-19 testing is available, accommodating for people with seeing disabilities, and that sites are accessible?
- Are measures being considered or been taken to arrange for transportation for all people with disabilities to get to and from testing sites?
- What support mechanisms are in place to address the fact that the blind low-vision will struggle to leave their house?
- Is there consideration regarding the growing senior population with seeing disabilities – the most vulnerable demographic for COVID-19
- Are government announcements/communications to the public regarding COVID-19 in accessible format for the blind/low-vision?
- What guidelines can be provided on how a blind person can go about social distancing?

- Will those who are blind/low vision be captured by the Federal governments income support measures for Canadians not eligible for EI sickness benefits?



Robert McCreight

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T: 613.235.0221 ext.232 | **C:** 613-447-1222

E: rmccreight@capitalhill.ca

From: Robert McCreight

Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 1:08 PM

To: Bélair, Thierry (HC/SC); sabina.saini@canada.ca; kathryn.nowers@canada.ca

Subject: FW: Urgent Request for Vital Information (COVID-19 and Canadians with Seeing Disabilities)

Good afternoon everyone,

Please see the below email, sent to the Office of Minister Qualtrough earlier this morning, and take note of some of the questions I've listed regarding the Government of Canada's support for persons with seeing disabilities during this unprecedented situation.

The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) and its partners in the seeing disability community are quite concerned and would welcome any information you are able to share.

I can also be reached by phone if you would like to discuss – 613-447-1222.

Thanks in advance,

Robert

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T: 613.235.0221 ext.232 | **C:** 613-447-1222

E: rmccreight@capitalhill.ca

From: Robert McCreight

Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 10:50 AM

To: Carla.Qualtrough@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Taras.zalusky@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca; ashley.michnowski@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Sadie.ghosn@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Nicholas.kang@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Cc: Michael Baillargeon ; Doug Earle ; 'jprorowse@ccbnational.net' ; 'CCB President' ; 'jtokos@ccbnational.net'

Subject: Urgent Request for Vital Information (COVID-19 and Canadians with Seeing Disabilities)

Importance: High

Good morning everyone,

Setting aside the Canadian Council of the Blind's meeting request for now (below) – it should be shelved for the immediate future. I am hoping to find out more regarding the government's plans to ensure that

Canadians with disabilities are supported as the COVID-19 situation evolves daily – especially those who are blind and low-vision.

I'm hoping someone in your office can give me a call to discuss the pandemic's impact on the blind community as soon as possible. I can be reached at 613-447-1222.

The big questions that come to mind are the following:

- Are there efforts being done to ensure that COVID-19 testing is available, accommodating for people with seeing disabilities, and that sites are accessible?
- Are measures being considered or been taken to arrange for transportation for all people with disabilities to get to and from testing sites?
- What support mechanisms are in place to address the fact that the blind low-vision will struggle to leave their house?
- Is there consideration regarding the growing senior population with seeing disabilities – the most vulnerable demographic for COVID-19
- Are government announcements/communications to the public regarding COVID-19 in accessible format for the blind/low-vision?
- What guidelines can be provided on how a blind person can go about social distancing?
- Will those who are blind/low vision be captured by the Federal governments income support measures for Canadians not eligible for EI sickness benefits?

The CCB is hoping to share as much information as possible with its members as part of a proactive approach. We will include any additional recommendations you suggest sharing in a notice to our members. As this unprecedented situation continues to develop, we want to make sure that vulnerable Canadians are well-equipped to weather the storm, and that they are not forgotten. We would appreciate any assistance or guidance you can provide in that regard.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Robert

Robert McCreight

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T: 613.235.0221 ext.232 | C: 613-447-1222

E: rmccreight@capitalhill.ca

From: CCB President <ccbpresident@ccbnational.net>

Sent: Sunday, March 8, 2020 11:41 AM

To: Carla.Qualtrough@hrsdcc.gc.ca; Taras.zalusky@hrsdcc.gc.ca; ashley.michnowski@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Sadie.ghosn@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Nicholas.kang@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Cc: Michael Baillargeon [P]; Doug Earle <dearle@fightingblindness.ca>; Robert McCreight <RMcCreight@capitalhill.ca>; Louise <ccbpresident@ccbnational.net>

Subject: Request to Meet with Minister Qualtrough (Disability Inclusion)

Monday, March 9th, 2020.

Recipients: Carla.Qualtrough@hrsdcc.gc.ca; Taras.zalusky@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca;

ashley.michnowski@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Sadie.ghosn@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca; Nicholas.kang@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Good morning all,

As President of the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) and in collaboration with Doug Earle, President of Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC), I'm writing on behalf of a group of stakeholders in the seeing disability community – which includes the Canadian Council of the Blind, Fighting Blindness Canada, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Association of Optometrists, and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society – to request a meeting with Minister Qualtrough at her earliest convenience, in her capacity as the Minister responsible for disability inclusion.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Minister and discuss how our group can be of service in helping to fulfill the objectives outlined in her mandate letter, including to “undertake initiatives to improve the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities and specifically target barriers to full participation in the labour force” and “ensuring the timely and ambitious implementation of the Accessible Canada Act [...] in consultation with the disability community.”

The group is hoping for 30 minutes of Minister Qualtrough's time to brief her on the outcomes from our Canadian Vision 2020 Summit held last month (link to videos of keynote speaker, Deputy Minister Yazmine Laroche, and three panel discussions below), and to present our recently-completed “Canadian Vision 2020 Summit White Papers,” which provide voice to the seeing disability community's recommendations to support vision research discovery and improve our shared quality of life and access to vital health care and services.

The papers cover three main themes: Supporting Vision Research, Living with Vision Loss, and Equity and Access to Vision Health Care. As Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, and in particular as a valued member of our community, we would be keen to initiate discussion on the issue of employment and marginalization when it comes to working with vision loss. The Minister's perspective is essential in developing solutions for the challenges we all face.

Understanding that Minister Qualtrough's schedule is very busy, we remain flexible in finding a suitable time to meet, at a time convenient to her, in Ottawa in the next two sitting weeks (week of March 9th and week of March 23rd).

Canadian Vision Summit 2020 – Ottawa, ON, February 12, 2020

[Keynote Speaker: Deputy Minister Yazmine Laroche, Public Service Accessibility, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat](#)

[Panel 1 – Vision Research \(Doug Earle, President, Fighting Blindness Canada\)](#)

[Panel 2 – Living with Vision Loss \(Louise Gillis, National President, Canadian Council of the Blind\)](#)

[Panel 3 – Equity and Access to Vision Care \(Francois Couillard, President, Canadian Association of Optometrists\)](#)

See attached Vision 2020 Summit Program and letter.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise Gillis". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'L' being particularly large and decorative.

Louise Gillis
National President
Canadian Council of the Blind

Louise Gillis
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