

**VISION LOSS  
REHABILITATION™**  
CANADA

# Building a Limitless Future

Annual Report 2021-2022







# **Building a Future of Health and Independence**



## Letter from the Board Chair and President & CEO

This past year has truly been an extraordinary journey for Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada and all whom we provide services to. As we reflect on the past year and all that we have accomplished, it is clear that the way we deliver services has changed forever.

This year, to meet the increasing demand for our services across the country, we rapidly expanded our talent pool to ensure that we can continue to provide high quality services and support to all of our clients from coast to coast.

In addition to growing our teams, we also expanded and adapted our programs to better support our clients and staff in three key areas including mental health, aging in place, and initiatives that support underserved communities.

In line with our strategic mandates, we have continued to develop and grow our partnerships with communities and organizations across the country, allowing us to better support Canadians affected by vision loss no matter where they reside.

None of this would have been possible without our community of partners and stakeholders.

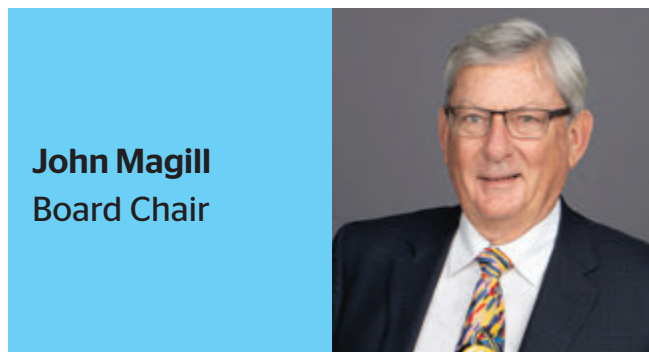
Our extraordinary staff teams across the country continue to demonstrate an incredible capacity for empathy, compassion, and understanding. We are truly lucky to have such an outstanding group of individuals dedicated and passionate about delivering rehabilitation and other essential services to people impacted by vision loss.

Together, we have made extraordinary strides towards building a strong future for Canadians impacted by vision loss.

As we look to the future, we will continue to work to enhance the care our clients receive - and in the process, help our clients and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada aim higher than ever before.



**Jennifer Urosevic**  
President & CEO



**John Magill**  
Board Chair

# Highlights



## Reflecting on a year of transformation and innovation

### Cultivating high quality talent

In February, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC) delivered our first virtual job fair in order to meet the growing need for exceptional talent in our frontline service roles nationwide. The career fair was a tremendous success, garnering more than 200 registrants. This resulted in the submission of more than 120 resumes and 40 applications for specific roles.

### Providing support in times of crisis

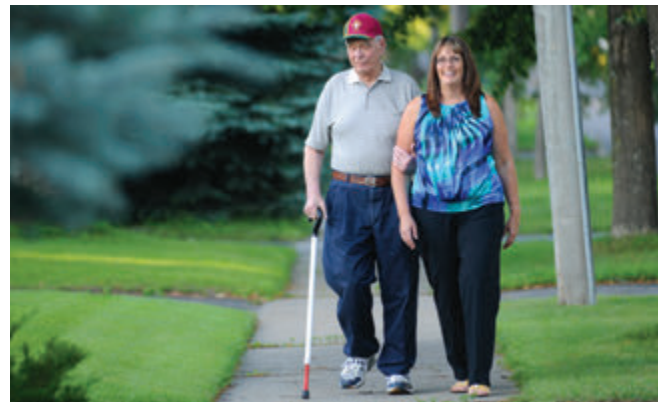
In Northern Ontario, we initiated conversations to support the community of Grassy Narrows First Nation.

Over the past year, the community was devastated by mercury poisoning – resulting in many residents experiencing sudden and severe vision loss.

In response, VLRC worked quickly and collaboratively with community leaders to provide rapid in-person and virtual support for residents experiencing vision loss, ensuring they can get the care and support they need during this time of crisis.

### Enabling safety and independence for seniors

In British Columbia, our teams have rolled out a comprehensive Falls Prevention program to help people experiencing vision loss understand the factors that can lead to falls and the steps to take to prevent them. This important program helps support older Canadians age in place and greatly reduces the strain on the healthcare system.



## Launching the enhanced service delivery model

This year, we launched our enhanced service delivery model to empower and support clients and their caregivers to be full partners within the care team.

Through an interdisciplinary approach to care, this model enhances the client experience, creating a seamless experience within our organization and along the healthcare continuum.

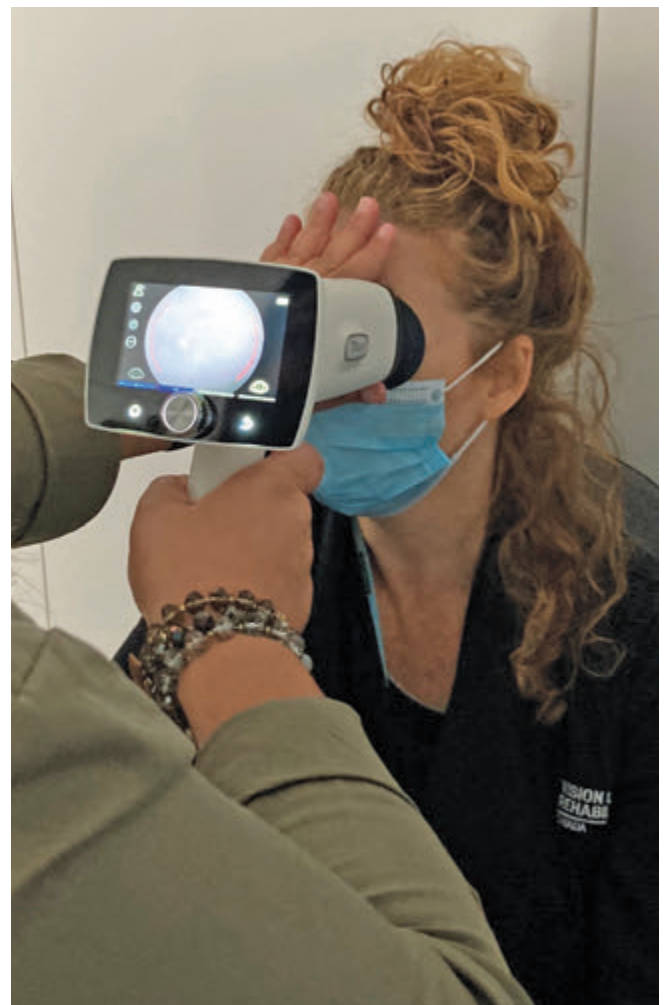
**Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians.** In fact, falls account for **85%** of seniors' injury-related hospitalizations and cause **95%** of all hip fractures.

## Introducing the Eye Health Screening Initiative

This year marked the start of our Eye Health Screening Initiative (EHSI). The EHSI uses Canada's first Health Canada approved automated Diabetic Retinopathy screening software (AI retinal image screening) and technology, which features portable, handheld fundus cameras and leverages existing health service providers to increase access to Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) screening.

The program aims to improve population health outcomes; reduce the incidence of vision loss through early detection; support individuals in remote, rural, and/or Indigenous communities; and provide care closer to home.

In 2022, we onboarded an additional 13 partners to the program and began rolling out the project across Northern and Eastern Ontario. The initiative integrates into established programs and services including primary care practices, diabetes centres, community paramedicine, pharmacies, and hospitals. We also developed best practices for screening patients, allowing both clinical and non-clinical staff to identify referable DR patients quickly and accurately.



# Our Impact

## Alan's story

When Alan first received his diagnosis of Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), a rare genetic eye disease that causes individuals to slowly lose their vision, he felt as though his entire world had fallen apart.

“When I was first diagnosed, I felt sad, angry, defeated, and lonely. The worst part [about RP] is that I can’t know when or how much vision I’ll lose,” says Alan. But at the same time, he felt relieved because he finally had the answer to why he was experiencing vision loss.

During the first few months following his diagnosis, Alan felt overwhelmed by all of these emotions and thoughts – and it took a heavy toll. “I had become a shut-in, which is not like me at all,” he explains.

It wasn’t until his ophthalmologist suggested that he reach out to Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada in New Brunswick, that Alan realized how much he truly needed some support. “At first I was in shock,” he says. “It took me a long time to realize how much this had affected my life.”

While adjusting to life with vision loss, Alan found himself struggling to get around his home and community safely. “While I still have central vision, I sometimes struggle with everyday things. For example, I [found myself] tripping over things while going for walks or even almost falling at times when the ground was uneven.”

Over the next few months, Alan worked with Low Vision and Orientation and Mobility Specialists to help him regain his confidence and independence – leaving him feeling empowered to engage with his community again.



But getting around safely and comfortably isn't the only thing that can pose a challenge for people with vision loss. For Alan, one of the most challenging parts about losing his vision was feeling like he had to give up on the things he loved. "It was hurting my eyes to use my phone or to [play video games]. I didn't know what to do because I love gaming - it's a huge hobby and social outlet for me. I didn't want to give it up."

Today, Alan is continuing to work with Technology Specialists to build his skills so he can continue to do the things he is most passionate about.

Alongside accessing many of VLRC's primary services, Alan also participated in the Adjustment to Vision Loss support group. "It was so helpful for me," he says. "To be able to be around people who had an idea of what I was going through. There was even someone in the group who also had RP - it was great to talk to them. It helped me to better understand myself."

With the support and guidance he's gained from VLRC, Alan says he feels like a whole new person. Today, he has become a passionate advocate for accessibility and inclusion and wants to act as a role model for others who are facing barriers in life.

"Moving forward, I see myself contributing in some way," he explains. "I want to help [others] feel empowered to seek out help - and benefit from it in the way I was able to with VLRC."



"The most important thing to keep in mind is to realize that you can be offered help and it will always be there, but unless you take it, nothing will ever change."

# Partnerships from Coast to Coast

## Connecting communities across Canada with Vision Loss Rehabilitation

Vision loss is not a standalone issue. It is linked to a host of other mental and physical health considerations that can deeply affect a person's overall quality of life.

VLRC is working alongside organizations across the country to invest in and develop partnerships that support connected care.

---

### The BC Psychological Association

#### British Columbia

The British Columbia Psychological Association (BCPA) is a voluntary body committed to advancing psychology and the psychological well-being of all British Columbians. This year, we initiated conversations to develop a partnership with BCPA to deliver mental health counselling and supports within our core services. Trained psychologists and counsellors will be available in key offices across the province, but will also provide virtual services to reduce barriers to accessing care.



---

### Career Connections

#### Manitoba

Career Connections Inc. is a professional, results driven, employment agency that specializes in working with and securing employment for individuals living with a disability. In partnership with Career Connections, VLRC provides access to a wide range of our services to support each participant's employment goals.



# Centre for Sight Enhancement

## Ontario

Located within the University of Waterloo’s School of Optometry and Vision Science’s Optometry Clinic, the Centre for Sight Enhancement provides a comprehensive range of services, including assessment, prescription, counselling services, and consultation. VLRC has been a partner through referrals to the clinic for specialized services and through integration activities for community-based vision rehabilitation across the province.

.....



# Dalhousie University’s Clinical Vision Science Program

## Nova Scotia

Dalhousie University’s Clinical Vision Science program is an innovative graduate program that features an integrated approach to the field of vision sciences. This critical partnership provides opportunities for orthoptic students to learn about VLRC services and how healthcare professionals and rehabilitation staff can work collaboratively along the healthcare continuum.

.....



# Labrador Friendship Centre

## Newfoundland and Labrador

The Labrador Friendship Centre supports Indigenous Peoples of Labrador through a variety of social, cultural, health, educational, employment, and developmental initiatives. This partnership enables VLRC staff to travel to remote communities in Labrador to provide critical supports and vision loss rehabilitation services.

.....

# Rapid Rehabilitation and Reablement Program

## New Brunswick

This year, VLRC was an active member of the New Brunswick Rehabilitation and Reablement Program provincial steering committee. The program is a key component in the province’s aging in place strategy and was designed to help seniors leave the hospital sooner or avoid hospitalization altogether.



# By the Numbers

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada proudly serves people with vision loss from coast to coast. **Here's a snapshot of our impact last year:**

## Reach and impact

Total clients served

**31,000+**

New clients referred

**7,400+**

Total service hours delivered

**203,000+**

## Clients by age

Children and youth

**2,500+**

Working age

**8,600+**

Seniors

**19,900+**

## Service hours delivered

**32%**

Low vision  
and assistive  
technology  
services



**18%**

Essential skills  
for daily living



**16%**

Orientation,  
mobility, and  
travel services



**24%**

Client navigation,  
emotional  
support, and  
other services



**10%**

Intake and  
assessment

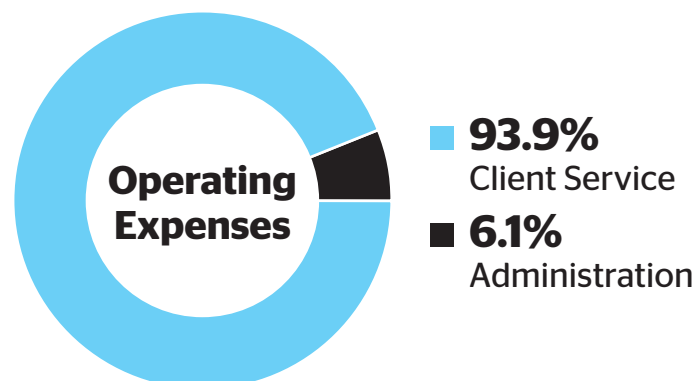
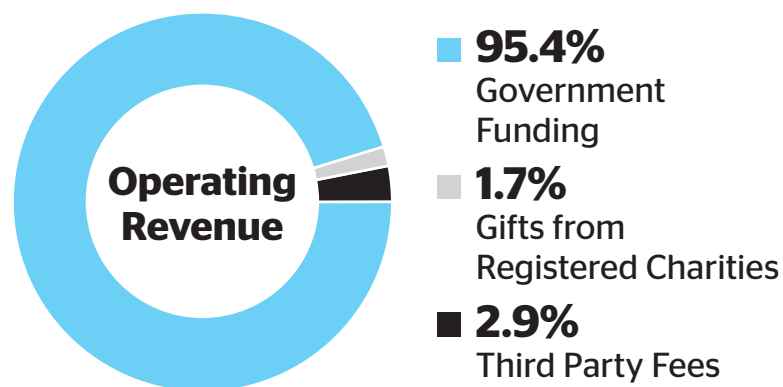




# Financials & Board of Directors

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada takes pride in upholding the highest standard of ethics and accountability in stewarding the funding we receive from our provincial government partners.

Our financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022 were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations and were audited by Ernst & Young LLP.



## Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors is comprised of industry leaders in a variety of fields across Canada, all of whom are dedicated to supporting our vital mission.

**Board Chair** • John Magill

**Finance Committee**

**Chair** • Daniel Zbacnik

**Service Quality Committee**

**Chair** • Betty Nobel

**Governance Committee**

**Chair** • Ron Noble

**CNIB Foundation Member**

**Representative** • John M. Rafferty

## Board Members 2021/22

Bill Blight

Dr. Mark Bona

Kelly Duffin

Sam Fulton

Shanti Gidwani

Brian Hook

Heather Mackenzie

Shelagh Maloney

Dr. Tanya Packer

Susan Scott Gabe



## VISION LOSS REHABILITATION™

CANADA

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC) is a not-for-profit national healthcare organization and the leading provider of rehabilitation therapy and healthcare services for individuals with vision loss.

### Stronger Together



Together, we support and stand by Canadians who are blind, partially sighted, or Deafblind.

Visit [visionlossrehab.ca](http://visionlossrehab.ca)

Email [info@vlrehab.ca](mailto:info@vlrehab.ca)

Call **1-844-887-8572**

 [@VisionLossRehabCanada](https://www.facebook.com/VisionLossRehabCanada)

 [@VisionLossRehab](https://twitter.com/VisionLossRehab)

 [@VisionLossRehab](https://www.linkedin.com/company/VisionLossRehab)