



**FIGHTING
BLINDNESS
CANADA**

April 25, 2019

FROM FOUNDATION TO FIGHTER

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

For 45 years, the Foundation Fighting Blindness has raised and directed critical funding into sight-saving research for blinding eye diseases.

From our earliest days as the RP Foundation of Canada, research has always been our focus. As a result, we're now Canada's largest private funder of vision research: the breakthroughs we've helped to fund have had significant implications not only for our original focus on retinal diseases, but for many other eye diseases, such as glaucoma. We're proud to say that, with recent advancements in gene therapy, stem cell therapy, and other promising treatment methods, we're now at a turning point in vision research. At this very moment, some eye diseases are closer than ever to being curable—or, at a minimum, treatable.

Given this turning point, our volunteer Board of Directors spent the last two years considering how best to develop our strategic plan to guide us through to 2023. Inspired by this new frontier in vision research and the impact that so many of our past research investments were having on the broader sphere of vision research, the Foundation's Board of Directors voted to expand the organization's research scope to include all blinding eye diseases and invite all interested Canadians to support our research. To reflect this exciting shift, I'm pleased to tell you that our organization is evolving. Today, we are moving past Foundation.

Today, welcome to Fighting Blindness Canada.

This is an exciting step for us—but it's also a necessary one. According to the *2017 Canadian Survey on Disability*, over 1.5 million Canadians are living with some form of vision loss. Even more Canadians are in danger of losing their sight: In 2012, studies revealed that over 5.59 million Canadians were living with an eye disease—either age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, or glaucoma for example—that puts them at risk of vision loss. These numbers are projected to increase dramatically as our population ages, doubling, according to one study, over a period of 25 years.

Given these numbers, it's clear that expanding our mandate to find treatments and cures for all blinding eye diseases is the right thing to do. Given our research track record, we are well positioned to take on the challenge of raising the bar in funding treatments and cures for vision loss. Given our focus on community and education, we are the right organization to lead the fight against blinding eye diseases. By directly impacting more Canadians, we will encourage more support for vision research, benefiting us all.



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You'll find more information about this historic change in the FAQ below, but I want to emphasize one thing: throughout its many iterations, Fighting Blindness Canada has always been, and will always be, a community dedicated to the common goal of eradicating blindness in Canada. You will see that goal reflected in everything that we do: from raising and directing research dollars to providing crucial information into preventing and treating blinding eye diseases, to advocating to bring new treatments and cures to Canadian clinics. You'll also see it in our updated website, which I encourage you to visit.

As Fighting Blindness Canada, we're proud to carry the legacy of the Foundation Fighting Blindness forward, and we are excited to build our community. Together, we will shape a future without blindness.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Doug Earle
President & CEO
Fighting Blindness Canada



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FAQ

WHY CHANGE OUR NAME?

Fighting Blindness Canada is an agile, progressive and innovative organization committed to funding leading-edge research into blinding eye diseases. As the country's largest private funder of vision research in Canada, FBC identifies the best, most promising research to accelerate the development of treatments and cures for blinding eye diseases, and raises and stewards funds to support this essential, sight-saving research.

Changing our name to Fighting Blindness Canada allows us to better communicate our vital mission to Canadians. Removing the term "Foundation" better reflects our action-oriented nature and emphasizes our need to prioritize vision research in order to support the 5.59 million Canadians who are at significant risk of developing a blinding eye disease, the 1.5 million Canadians living with a seeing disability, and the countless family members and friends who care about them. Adding "Canada" reflects our national focus and distinguishes us from organizations in other countries.

WHY EXPAND OUR MISSION?

Expanding our mission will allow us to be more inclusive. As Fighting Blindness Canada, we can invite a larger audience to join us in supporting our research agenda of developing treatments and cures for blinding eye diseases.

Though supporting research into retinitis pigmentosa and other rare inherited retinal diseases was our original focus in the 1970s, we started funding research into age-related macular degeneration more than 20 years ago! Since then, we're proud that the discoveries we've helped fund have shaped our understanding of other eye diseases, including glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. Gene therapy, stem cell therapy and other promising treatment methods offer a paradigm shift that means some eye diseases are closer than ever to being curable—or at a minimum, treatable.

These interconnections between different areas of scientific investigation have led to the natural evolution and expansion of FBC's disease scope. Strengthening our community of donors will allow FBC to more effectively fund the research that will help eradicate blinding eye diseases, both within the inherited retinal family of diseases and more broadly. **Both as FFB and as FBC, all the research we fund supports our goal of understanding why vision loss occurs, how it can be slowed or stopped, and how sight can be restored.**



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DOES THIS MEAN OUR ORGANIZATION WILL NOT BE FUNDING AS MUCH RESEARCH INTO INHERITED RETINAL DISEASES (IRDS)?

No, it does not.

Increasing our scope to include other eye diseases does not mean less funding for inherited retinal disease research. FBC has always prided itself on funding only the best vision research, whether it be in the area of stem cells, gene therapy, artificial vision, neuroprotective therapies, or optogenetics.

Our Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and Mission Investment Steering Committee (MISC) are comprised of world leading experts in discovery and translational research. These two oversight committees work with FBC's Board of Directors to determine the best research strategies that will enable FBC to achieve its mission.

DOES THIS MEAN FIGHTING BLINDNESS CANADA WILL FUND RESEARCH INTO ANY BLINDING EYE DISEASE?

Yes, but only if the research meets the high standards of quality and success as determined by our Scientific Advisory Board and Mission Investment Steering Committee.

Drawing on the expertise of our Scientific Advisory Board, combined with our Mission Investment Steering Committee's state-of-the-art investment management strategies, Fighting Blindness Canada can ensure that it not only funds the best, most promising research into blinding eye diseases, but that those funded projects have the best chance of reaching clinics and treatment centres in Canada.

CAN I STILL RESTRICT MY DONATION?

Yes, if the gift is over \$5,000. Donors can "restrict" or focus their donation over \$5,000 on a specific project area or area of study, such as a specific gene mutation in the inherited retinal disease family.

That said, all of the research we fund must meet extremely high standards of quality and success as determined by our SAB and MISC. We encourage both restricted and unrestricted donations.