



PRESS RELEASE – June 7 2016

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE
STANDARD UNDER THE AODA A STEP BACKWARD**

Yesterday, the Liberal Government announced their amendments to the Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. These amendments did not improve accessibility for persons with disabilities – it weakened them.

The new Standard does not provide critical guidance from consumers on what they would find beneficial at low or no cost to the organization.

ARCH Disability Law Centre worked in collaboration with the AODA Alliance to produce a report informed by our members about what kind of low or no expense changes that the government could make to the Customer Services Standard that would improve accessibility for persons with disabilities. These reports can be found on our websites: www.archdisabilitylaw.ca and www.aodaalliance.org

Underscored throughout our consultations was the need for low or no cost changes that make a significant difference such as providing washroom signs in braille so persons who are blind know which gender specific washroom to use. Other examples include: designating an employee within an organization's existing staff to ensure accessible customer service and ensure that complaints appropriately resolved; posting signage about scent-free policies as an important step to public education about the effect of fragrances or scents on persons with multiple chemical and environmental sensitivities; requiring accessible "point-of-sale" and movable debit/credit information transaction machines (ITMs); and implementing visual fire alarms as a key component of accessibility and health and safety for persons who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. These are but a few of the essential components of what a meaningful accessibility standard for persons with disabilities should include.

Not one of these factors was included in the amended Customer Service Standard.

The amendments are an extremely frustrating and inadequate response to making accessibility a reality for Ontarians with disabilities.

For more information please contact Dianne Wintermute, ARCH staff lawyer, at :

wintermd@lao.on.ca OR

ARCH Disability Law Centre Tel.: 1-866-482-2724 TTY.: 1-866-482-2728

- END -