 **Written Submission**

**to Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on Bill C-81, *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada***

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Strengthening Bill C-81

Bill C-81, *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*, is a significant piece of legislation that has the potential to truly advance accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Canada. ARCH Disability Law Centre makes the following recommendations for strengthening Bill C-81. These recommended amendments are necessary to ensure that the Bill achieves its purpose and potential.

Our recommendations are grounded in the legal research and analysis that ARCH conducted on Bill C-81, consultations we conducted with disability communities that informed our final report, and ARCH’s ongoing work with disability organizations and communities in relation to the Bill. To read ARCH’s final report on Bill C-81, go to: <http://archdisabilitylaw.ca/Legal_Analysis_of_Accessible_Canada_Act_Final_Report>.

In addition, these recommendations are informed by ARCH’s expertise in human rights law, international disability rights law, accessibility laws, and the experiences of the communities of persons with disabilities whom we serve. Many of the recommendations made by the Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance (FALA), the AODA Alliance, other disability organizations and persons with disabilities complement and enhance the recommendations made by ARCH.

Enclosed with this written submission is a copy of ARCH’s Final Report on Bill C-81 and ARCH’s Recommendations for Amending Bill C-81. More detailed information can be found in these documents. **Our Recommendations document includes language for recommended amendments to Bill C-81**.

Bill C-81 must:

1. In provisions we outline in our Recommendations, use the word shall instead of may so that government and other bodies are required to act.

2. Designate CASDO as the only body to develop accessibility standards.

3. Designate the Accessibility Commissioner as the one body to handle compliance with accessibility standards and adjudication of complaints.

4. Include dates and timelines.

5. Make CASDO, the Accessibility Commissioner and other key positions sufficiently independent.

6. Not permit organizations to be exempted from complying with accessibility requirements.

**7. Not allow accessibility requirements to diminish existing legal rights of persons with disabilities.**

**8. Address barriers created by poverty and intersectional discrimination by adding additional principles to section 6.**

**9. Recognize ASL and lsq as official language of people who are Deaf in Canada.**

**10. Address barriers experienced by Indigenous and First Nations persons with disabilities.**

**11. Be clarified to ensure that communication is addressed within each of the areas enumerated in section 5, in a manner that complements existing legal obligations to accommodate persons with disabilities.**

**12. Include stronger provisions for reviewing the *Accessible Canada Act* and monitoring the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.***

**13. Include stronger definitions of disability and barrier.**

**14. Include duties to ensure that progressive realization of a barrier-free Canada is implemented.**

**15. Ensure that the process for making complaints to the Accessibility Commissioner is fair.**

Please consult ARCH’s enclosed Recommendations document for specific language for amendments to Bill C-81. Our Recommendations can also be found on our website by going to: <http://archdisabilitylaw.ca/node/1344>