



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **BC man wins important human rights victory for Deaf people in need of welfare**

VANCOUVER, B.C. – Christopher Shay has won his human rights complaint against the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, with the Ministry agreeing to make a range of changes to improve accessibility and fairness for people who have communication barriers and need welfare.

Mr. Shay, who is Deaf, applied for income assistance in September, 2014, but had to wait 5 weeks to receive a welfare cheque. Mr. Shay, who had received eviction notices because he couldn't pay his rent, also told the Ministry that he had an immediate need for assistance, a request that according to the Ministry's service standards should have resulted in him receiving assistance on an expedited basis. Throughout the application process he faced numerous accessibility issues because the Ministry did not accommodate his disability.

Mr. Shay, with the assistance of lawyers at the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre, filed a human rights complaint against MSDSI alleging that the delays were discriminatory and the Ministry failed to accommodate his disability. The Ministry entered into settlement negotiations with Mr. Shay, and agreed to make a series of changes in order to accommodate people who are Deaf and have other communication barriers.

Some of the changes that the Ministry has agreed to make include asking specifically whether applicants for assistance have a communication barrier, offering to communicate with applicants in writing using email, arranging for in-person application meetings with sign language interpreters on an expedited basis, and assigning applicants who are Deaf to a newly-created Specialized Intake Unit trained in accommodating people who have communication barriers.

**Mr. Shay will be available for interviews on Friday, September 2, 2016 at 9am at the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre at 208-1090 West Pender Street in Vancouver. A sign language interpreter will be present.**

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**For more information, please contact:**

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