

# **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**

## **Customer Service Standard**

### **Policies and Procedures**

## Policy and Procedures

### Introduction

***Building on a foundation of commitment to accessibility Lassing Dikken continues to work with customers, staff, and the community to identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation to ensure compliance with the Customer Service Standard.***

### Definition of Disability

“Disability” means,

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”).

**Ontario Human Rights Commission/Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.**

### The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law on June 13, 2005. Under this landmark legislation, the government of Ontario is developing mandatory accessibility standards that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The standards apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario. The goal is for the province to be accessible by 2025.

The five key areas of focus are:

- Customer Service;
- Information and Communication;
- Employment;
- Transportation ;
- Built Environment.

The Customer Service Standard is the first standard developed to become a regulation and came into force on January 1, 2008. The standard addresses business practices to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.

Information and Communication, Employment and Transportation have been combined into one Integrated Standard, which was enacted in July, 2011.

The Built Environment public comments are being integrated into the Ontario Building Code, so only one piece of legislation will provide the standard.

### **The Customer Service Standard (AODA)**

Every business and organization operating in Ontario that provides goods and services to the public or other organizations and has at least one employee in Ontario must comply. To meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, organizations must:

1. Establish policies and procedures on providing goods or services to customers with disabilities.
2. Provide training on how to serve customers with disabilities to staff, volunteers, contractors, and all members of our organization or other third parties on your behalf, and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices and procedures.
3. Establish a process for receiving feedback on how you provide service to customers with disabilities and how you will respond to feedback and take action on any complaints. Make information about the feedback process readily available to the public.
4. Communicate with a customer with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Let customers with disabilities bring their service animals onto any part of your premises open to the public, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law. However, the service animal must meet the policy requirements detailed later in this document.
6. Let customers with disabilities bring their support person with them when accessing goods or services on parts of your premises open to the public.
7. Let the public know when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access your goods or services are temporarily unavailable.
8. Document all policies, practices and procedures to providing accessible customer service and notify the public that these documents are available upon request.

## **Economic Impact of Accessibility**

Disability impacts the lives of many Ontarians and the numbers of people with disabilities is increasing.

- In 20 years, one in five Ontarians are likely to have some kind of disability compared with approximately one in seven today.
- 10 – 20% of the general population have hearing loss; 50% of people over 65 have hearing loss.
- 600,000 Canadians have self identified as having vision loss.
- 6% of people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair.
- 70% of disabilities are hidden and often forgotten.
- Many of our veterans have disabilities. Men and women, who want to carry on their life activities with friends and family, will demand access to do so.
- It is projected that the older population will double in the next 25 years.

The disability sector is a growing market. Research indicates accessible service attracts more customers with disabilities, resulting in return visits and increased revenue.

- Persons with disabilities spend an estimated 25 billion a year in consumer spending. An individual with a disability impacts the spending decision of another 12 to 15 Canadians. (Source: Royal Bank, 2000).
- In Canada, Europe and the US, 75% of people with disabilities are physically and financially able to travel. People are living longer and have increased travel income to spend, creating increased tourism opportunities.
- Many communities are adopting age friendly principles focusing on access, to address the needs of the older population.
- A new report, “Releasing Constraints – Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario”, commissioned by the Province of Ontario, examines the economic impact of achieving substantially higher levels of accessibility on individuals, on markets and on social units. (Report prepared by the Martin Prosperity Group, the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre and the Institute for Competiveness and Prosperity). Highlights include:
  - Positive growth generated by greater participation in the economy.
  - Accelerated growth in the retail and tourism sectors.
  - Increases in individual and family income.

## **Accessible Customer Service at Lassing Dibben**

Lassing Dibben has had a long standing commitment to accessibility for customers with disabilities. The AODA Customer Service Standard now mandates a requirement to meet the needs of persons with disabilities with clearly defined policies and procedures.

To ensure compliance with the Customer Service Standard, Lassing Dibben has:

- *Developed new policies and procedures, as required;*
- *Developed and implemented a communication plan to increase understanding of the Customer Service Standard.*
- *Educated all staff to interact with disabled customers.*

## **Customer Service Standard – Policies and Procedures**

In preparing for the compliance requirements, Lassing Dibben has made reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies and procedures are consistent with the following principles, as defined by the Customer Service Standard, AODA:

- All goods and services at Lassing Dibben will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity of people with disabilities.
  - Dignity: service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
  - Independence: when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own, without unnecessary help or interference from others.
  - Integration and Equal Opportunity: service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept inconvenience or lesser quality. Sometimes this may mean that Lassing Dibben has to treat individuals slightly differently so that they can benefit fully from the services.

## **Assistive Devices**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben is committed to serving people with disabilities, and ensuring that those who use assistive devices will benefit from enjoying a fulfilling experience.

### **Procedures:**

We ensure that:

- Our employees are aware of the various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our services such as:
  - Wheelchairs
  - Hearing assistive receivers;

## **Communicating with a Customer with a Disability**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben's policies and procedures take a person's disability into account when communicating with the individual. Two-way communications is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. To communicate in an effective way, Lassing Dibben considers how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications. Where possible, Lassing Dibben asks the customer directly the best way to communicate with him/her.

### **Procedures:**

Lassing Dibben uses a variety of ways, wherever possible, to make communications more accessible by:

- Considering the needs of people with disabilities during the planning stage of services and communication development.
- Using plain language to make a document easier to read for people with certain learning disabilities.
- Offering information in alternate formats:
  - Hand-write or type information back and forth;
  - Printed hand-outs of commonly used information;
  - TTY where available;
  - E-mail as an alternate channel to provide accessible communication.

## **Service Animals**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben is committed to welcoming customers with disabilities who are accompanied by a trained, accredited service animal. A service animal may accompany a customer or any third party with a disability to all parts of our premises that are open to the public. Service animals may be used for, but not limited to, the following disabilities: vision loss, physical disability, hearing loss, autism, epilepsy etc. Lassing Dibben ensures that all employees are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities, who are accompanied by a service animal.

### **Procedures:**

To be considered a service animal under this standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability may be asked to provide documentation from a registered health professional confirming that it is required because of his or her disability. Service animals are not pets - they are working animals. They are used by people with disabilities to overcome barriers much like assistive devices such as a white cane or a wheelchair.

Guide dogs or other service animals, including service animals in training, are allowed to accompany people with disabilities on the Lassing Dibben premises open to the public.

If the service animal is causing a disturbance for other customers, the customer and accompanying service dog may be required to leave the area.

The owner is responsible to "stoop and scoop".

Lassing Dibben anticipates there will be special situations and is prepared to make every effort to accommodate the circumstances on an individual basis, as they arise, keeping safety to all customers and service animals in mind.

Customers can contact front office personnel for more information.

## **Support Persons**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter Lassing Dibben's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on Lassing Dibben premises.

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

If, for any reason, Lassing Dibben might require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons, the company will consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs, consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence and determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health and safety of the person or others on the premises.

### **Procedures:**

Customers are informed of this through Lassing Dibben's communication to the public either by signage or printed material.

## **Temporary Disruption of Service**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben is aware that temporary disruptions of services and programs may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within Lassing Dibben's control or knowledge. Lassing Dibben makes a reasonable effort to provide advance notice of the disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available.

### **Procedures:**

The notice is made available in the following manner, as appropriate.

- Temporary signage;

In the event of an unexpected disruption, advance notice is not possible. In such cases, Lassing Dibben will provide notice, as soon as possible.

## **Process to Receive and Respond to Feedback**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben has a process in place for receiving and responding to feedback about how goods and services are provided to customers with disabilities.

### **Procedures:**

Customers with disabilities can offer their feedback in the following ways:

- By e-mail;
- By telephone;
- In writing where correspondence is re-directed to the appropriate response employee;
- In person to staff.

Lassing Dibben will ensure the feedback process is accessible by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

The customer is requested to provide their name and contact information (phone, e-mail). Once feedback is received, the following actions are taken to respond:

- The feedback is directed to the appropriate person for action.
- The feedback is assessed for appropriate action.
- Notification to the customer that the matter has been addressed.

The feedback process is readily available to the public through:

- A sign in reception;
- A document describing the feedback process, available on request;

## **Customer Service Training**

### **Policy:**

Lassing Dibben provides training to all employees, volunteers and staff.

### **Procedures:**

New staff will also receive training. This training will be provided as soon as practicable or as soon as it can be done in the circumstances, after an employee begins employment. The “New Employee Orientation Checklist” ensures that this takes place soon after their employment begins.

A variety of methods are used including training presentations, Ministry of Community and Social Services web sites, e-training and videos, dependent on need, job descriptions and functions. Training is also included as part of a larger training program, such as basic orientation, basic safety awareness training and workplace violence and harassment training.

The training content, required by the Customer Service Standard, includes the following:

- The history of the legislation and the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Lassing Dibben’s services.
- Lassing Dibben’s policies and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- On-going training in connection with any changes to Lassing Dibben’s policies and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities is provided.

Training is recorded for staff and includes name, date and content.