

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Accessibility for Customer Service Standards Policy

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Issued:	December 31, 2011
Revised:	
Issue No.:	1.0

1.0 Policy Statement

FortisOntario and its operating subsidiaries recognize that persons with disabilities should be provided with an equal opportunity to access goods and information in a manner consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality as stated in the regulations of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

2.0 Strategic Plan

FortisOntario in adopting the Accessibility for Customer Service Standards Policy (the "Policy") for all its operating subsidiaries, identifies such plan as a strategic priority and supports the Plan's goals to improve its customers' quality of life.

3.0 Purpose

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* ("AODA"), Ontario Regulation 429/07, provides for the establishment of accessibility standards. Accordingly, the "Customer Service Standard" and the "Integrated Accessibility Standards" (collectively the "Standards") have been filed as regulations under AODA. Under the Standards businesses and organizations must establish policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities. In addition, FortisOntario must use all reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices provide accessible customer services to people with various kinds of disabilities and that the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity, as defined herein, are respected.

The purpose of this policy is to fulfill certain requirements as set out in Ontario Regulation 429/07 made under AODA. In support of this Policy, corresponding procedures and practices will be set out to support the Policy and may be amended from time to time.

4.0 Administration

Procedures and practices may be amended or added to the Policy as necessary and appropriate in order to ensure that it is current and applicable. Such amendments or additions shall be approved by the Manager, Human Resources and be coordinated with, and form part of the Policy.

This Policy becomes effective on December 31, 2011.

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5.0 Definitions

- 5.1 **“Agents”** shall mean a person or business providing goods or services on behalf of FortisOntario through a contract or agreement.
- 5.2 **“Assistive Devices”** shall mean an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids etc.) to access and benefit from the goods and services of FortisOntario.
- 5.3 **“Barrier”** shall mean anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of the disability. Barriers may include a physical, architectural and attitudinal barrier as well as, an information or communication barrier, technological barriers, a policy, procedure or a practice.
- 5.4 **“Customer Service Representatives” (CSR)** An employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise who, on behalf of FortisOntario, provides or oversees the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.
- 5.5 **“Disability”** shall be defined as found in the Ontario Human Rights Code (Part II, Section 10.1) of the OHRC:
 - (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”)

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- 5.6 **“Guide Dogs or Service Animal”** shall mean any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.
- 5.7 **“Policy”** means this Accessibility for Customer Service Standards Policy.
- 5.8 **“Policies”** shall mean the policies that FortisOntario intends to implement including any rules for CSRs.
- 5.9 **“Procedures”** shall mean how FortisOntario will go about implementing their policy and the steps CSRs will be expected to take.
- 5.10 **“Practices”** shall mean what FortisOntario does on a day to day basis, including how CSRs actually offer or deliver the services.
- 5.11 **“Principle of Dignity”** shall mean the policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. People with disabilities will not be treated as an afterthought or be forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.
- 5.12 **“Principle of Independence”** in some instances, independence means freedom from control or influence of others - freedom to make your own choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to do things in your own way.
- 5.13 **“Principle of Integration”** shall mean integrated services are those that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way, as other customers.
- 5.14 **“Principle of Equal Opportunity”** equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.
- 5.15 **“Support Person”** shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend who accompanies a person with a disability to aid him or her with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services.

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5.16 “Third Party” a representative of a business or organization who is receiving FortisOntario goods or services or acting in an official capacity. Examples include: Provincial inspectors, vendors, local media, agencies, boards or commissions

6.0 Establishment of Policies, Practices and Procedures

FortisOntario shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the following principles:

- (a) The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- (b) The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- (c) Persons with a disability must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services. FortisOntario CSRs, when communicating with a person with a disability shall do so in a manner that accommodates the person's disability.

7.0 Implementation

7.1 Assistive Devices

FortisOntario permits persons with a disability to use and keep with them their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services offered by the Corporation. Appropriate CSRs will be trained and knowledgeable of the presence and use of FortisOntario owned assistive devices within their working department. CSRs will be available to assist with the assistive devices if requested for use by an individual.

7.2 Service Animals and Support Persons

FortisOntario shall allow persons with disabilities, who require to be accompanied by a Support Person, into all premises that are owned and operated FortisOntario facilities. Both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and the person with a disability will have access to their Support Person.

FortisOntario shall allow a person with a disability to be accompanied by a Guide Dog or other Service Animal into all facilities that are owned and operated by

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FortisOntario and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. FortisOntario employees may ask for a letter from a doctor or nurse allowing the Service Animal. The owner of the Service Animal is to keep care and control of the animal at all times while on FortisOntario property.

If the Service Animal is excluded by law from the facility, FortisOntario will make every effort to ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from FortisOntario goods and services.

In the event that admission fees are charged, advanced notice concerning what admission, if any, would be charged to a support person, and shall be posted in a conspicuous place.

7.3 Notice of Temporary Disruption

Notice of planned service disruptions must be provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities may use to access FortisOntario goods or services are temporarily unavailable or if the goods or service are expected to be temporarily unavailable.

The Notice must include the following information:

- a) The reason and information for disruption
- b) Anticipated duration
- c) Description of alternate facilities or services, if available
- d) Contact information

In the case of an unscheduled disruption, the Notice will be posted at the location of the service disruption as soon as practically possible.

In the case of a scheduled disruption FortisOntario will post the Notice prior to the disruption, at the physical location, on its website and if appropriate will advertise the disruption with local media outlets. The Notice will be posted to allow for sufficient time to inform ratepayers.

8.0 Documentation and Feedback

FortisOntario shall, upon request, give a copy of the policies, practices and procedures required under the Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service to any person. Any applicable photocopy charges will be applied.

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FortisOntario will have a mechanism to allow the public to provide feedback on the accessibility of the provision of goods and services.

9.0 Training

FortisOntario will provide training to its customer service representatives about the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities. All CSRs who deal with the public or other third parties, and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices, and procedures, will receive Accessibility Awareness Training as soon as practicable after beginning their employment. FortisOntario will also provide ongoing training with respect to changes in its policies, practices, and procedures to those individuals who require such training as soon as practicable. FortisOntario will keep records of the training provided.

Agents hired by FortisOntario who deal with the public during their work will provide proof of Accessibility Awareness training (as part of their contractual agreement) prior to their work for FortisOntario. If the agent is not required to meet the requirements of Regulation 429/07, FortisOntario may, at its discretion, provide the necessary training. Record of all training must be sent to the appropriate department for documentation.

10.0 Related Procedures/Resources

- 10.1 Accessibility Training Procedures**
- 10.2 Communicating with People with Disabilities Procedure**
- 10.3 Customer Request and Feedback Procedure**
- 10.4 Notice and Provision of Documents in Accessible Formats Procedure**
- 10.5 Notice of Temporary Disruptions Procedure**
- 10.6 Service Animals Procedure**
- 10.7 Support Persons Procedure**
- 10.8 Assistive Devices and Services for People with Disabilities**
- 10.9 Resources**

11.0 Forms

- 11.1 Service Interruption – Scheduled**
- 11.2 Service Interruption – Unscheduled**
- 11.3 Training Record**
- 11.4 Customer Request – Feedback Form**
- 11.5 Record of Customer Feedback**

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11.6 Notice – Admission Fees**11.7 Accessible Customer Service Brochure**

Please note this procedure applies to FortisOntario buildings only and notification regarding power outages affecting our customers will be handled under other operations and customer service policies and procedures.