

# **Customer Service Policy – Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA)**

## **Policy Statement**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), has as its stated purpose:

*to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.*

This policy applies to SEC agents<sup>1</sup> who deal with the public or other third parties, as well as persons involved in developing policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, whether they do so as employees, volunteers, Service Providers or otherwise.

## **Purpose**

Social Enterprise for Canada (SEC) will meet the requirements of accessibility standards established by AODA regulations. The standards outlined in this policy were implemented by SEC before January 1, 2012.

## **Definitions**

The AODA and Ontario Regulation 419/07 contain and refer to various definitions that are relevant to this policy, some of which are set out below.

### **Disability means:**

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, a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability, a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, a mental disorder, or 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”).

---

<sup>1</sup> Agent is defined as an employee, volunteer, student, Board member, consultant or member of an advisory council of SEC/SECC

**Disabilities** can be visible or invisible.

**Visible disabilities** include physical disabilities such as those caused by birth defect, illness or injury, and may require the use of assistive devices such as a wheelchair or prosthesis.

**Invisible disabilities** include deafness or hearing impediments, muteness or speech impediments, mental impairments, developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, etc.

**Barrier means:**

anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; (“obstacle”)

**Guide dog:**

a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations; (Blind Persons" Rights Act 1990 s1 (1).

**Service animal:**

an animal acting as a service animal for a person with a disability,

(a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or

(b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**Support person:**

in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## General

SEC's vision states: Building business. Enriching Lives. In keeping with the principles set out in the AODA, SEC is committed to providing respectful services that focus on the unique needs of each individual.

To achieve this, SEC shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties adhere to the following guiding principles as set out in Ontario Regulation 429/07:

1. The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
2. 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".
3. Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

## Responsibility

SEC is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities and will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

### **A. Communications:**

SEC supports an accessible Ontario where the independence and integration of those with disabilities is promoted. When communicating with a person with a disability, individuals working on behalf of SEC shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability and will make reasonable efforts to have the person with a disability understand both the content and intent of its communications.

### **B. Use of Assistive Devices:**

SEC is committed to servicing people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. SEC will ensure that agents are trained on or about the assistive devices made available by SEC and realize that persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices to access SEC goods and services.

### **C. Use of Support Animals:**

SEC is committed to welcoming people with disabilities and their service animals on our premises that are open to the public and other third parties and will permit the person to keep the service animal with them. SEC will also ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies have been trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

If the service animal is excluded by law from SEC premises or is unable to accommodate a person with a disability in our facility due to situations beyond our control, such as allergies to animals, SEC shall ensure that measures are available to permit persons with disabilities to access our goods and services through other means.

### **D. Use of Support Persons:**

SEC 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 will be allowed to enter SEC'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 SEC premises.

In the event that a fee is charged in relation to a support person's presence on SEC premises, advanced notice of the fee will be provided.

On occasion, persons with disabilities require the assistance of a support person to protect their health and safety or the health and safety of others. If necessary, SEC may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on SEC premises for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the person with the disability or others on the premises.

### **E. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities:**

In order to obtain, use or benefit from SEC's services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of SEC. If there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, SEC shall give notice of the disruption to the public.

The notice of disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available. Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by SEC, by posting it on SEC's website or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

## **F. Training:**

SEC will ensure appropriate levels of training to all agents, as well as those who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices and procedures dealing with the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties.

This training will be provided to all staff as soon as practicable in keeping with Ontario regulation 429/07. AODA training is an integral part of the orientation process and should be completed within the first 2 weeks of joining SEC.

Records of the training will be maintained by the appropriate departments, as well as a copy being provided to Human Resources, and includes the date on which training occurred and the number of persons trained.

Training will include the following topics:

- Purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- 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
- How to use the assistive devices available at SEC facilities and otherwise made available by SEC for persons with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing SEC goods and services
- SEC's policies, practices and procedures relating to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties.

Staff will be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to policies, practices and procedures dealing with the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties. New employees, including volunteers and students will receive training as part of SEC's Orientation Program.

## **G. Feedback Process:**

The ultimate goal of SEC is to meet and surpass customer expectation while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on SEC's services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way SEC provides goods and services to people with disabilities or questions regarding SEC's policy can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by delivering an electronic text by email, storage device other reasonable methods. Clients may use the AODA Client Feedback Form or any other written form of communication to provide feedback. Feedback should be forwarded to the Human Resources Department or emailed to [human.resources@socialenterprise.ca](mailto:human.resources@socialenterprise.ca)

Feedback will be reviewed by a team comprised of Senior Management and any issues will be addressed as required, in a timely manner.

**H. Availability of Accessible Customer Service Documents:**

SEC shall prepare any additional documents describing its policies, practices and procedures as may be required by Ontario Regulation 429/07 and, upon request, shall give a copy of such documents to any person. Further, SEC shall notify persons to whom it provides goods and services that the documents required under the Ontario Regulation 429/07 are available upon request.

SEC shall give the person the documents, or the information contained in the documents described above, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.