



## **ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province. The AODA allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

One of the specific standards that has been developed, and made law, is the Accessible Customer Service Standard. This standard detail specific requirements for all service providers. As part of this new Standard, all employers with one or more employees must ensure that their employees are all trained on how to properly provide goods and services to people with disabilities.

**Grain Farmers of Ontario** is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

### **ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

Assistive technology is a term used to describe the various forms of devices such as assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices used to assist persons with disabilities. These devices are used to support the needs of the individual person and specific disability by enabling them to perform tasks that they may not have been able to accomplish formerly.

Examples of assistive devices include hearing aids, speech amplification devices, white canes, wheelchairs, screen readers, etc. Ontario Employers are not responsible for providing any assistive devices under the Customer Service Standard, but rather, are responsible ensuring all employees are properly trained.

**Grain Farmers of Ontario** will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our good and services.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Accessible customer service requires employees to overcome and find ways around different barriers that customers may have. Employers need to ensure that their employees are trained on how to successfully communicate with customers with disabilities to ensure accessible goods and services.

**Grain Farmers of Ontario** employees will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that consider their disabilities, always ensuring to uphold their dignity and respect.

### **SERVICE ANIMALS**

In certain cases of disabilities, an animal may be more of an assistive form of aid rather than a device. These services animals are trained to carry out certain tasks that help people with disabilities. There are three types of assistive animals that have been categorized by the international assistance animal community:

1. Guide Animals: Used to guide the blind
2. Hearing Animals: Used to help signal the hearing impaired
3. Service Animals: Used to do work for persons with disabilities other than blindness or deafness

Under the Customer Service Standard, service animals must be allowed on parts of the workplace premises (excluding certain areas such as a kitchen). Fines for denying a service animal access in areas for the general public can be up to \$3000 in Ontario.

**Grain Farmers of Ontario** will welcome people with disabilities and their service animals into our workplace. Service animals are allowed on parts of our premises that are open to the public.

## **SUPPORT PERSONS**

Support persons are those that help persons with disabilities perform day to day tasks. Without support, the person may not be able to access your organization. All support persons should be welcomed into the workplace.

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises. **Grain Farmers of Ontario** will notify customers of this through a notice posted on our premises.

## **NOTICE FOR TEMPORARY DISRUPTION**

Sometimes accessibility features or services require repair or are just temporarily unavailable. The Customer Service Standard requires employers to communicate this to their customers by posting a notice.

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities **Grain Farmers of Ontario** will notify customers promptly. A clearly posted notice will include information about the reasons for the disruption, its anticipated length of time and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

## **TRAINING FOR STAFF**

Under the Customer Service Standard all employees who work with customers or create customer service plans should be trained. **Grain Farmers of Ontario** will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf. Our training will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- The requirements for the Customer Service Standard
- **Grain Farmers of Ontario's** specific accessible customer service plan
- How to interact 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 support person
- How to use any equipment or devices available at your workplace to assist with providing goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our organization's goods or services

This training will be provided to staff within the first three months of being hired and retrained in the event that changes are made to the plan.

## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

A process must be established for receiving feedback on how companies will provide service to customers with disabilities, and how companies will respond back and act on any complaints.

**Grain Farmers of Ontario** customers who wish to provide feedback on the way we provide goods and services to people with disabilities can do so in writing, in person, through e-mail, our website, or telephone. Customers may submit feedback directly on our website or obtain our *Customer Feedback Form* (downloadable from our website) to fill out and submit through email or mail. All feedback must be directed to:

Accessibility Coordinator:  
Sarah Plater Findlay  
[HR@gfo.ca](mailto:HR@gfo.ca)  
1-800-265-0550 ext. 405

Mailing address:  
679 Southgate Dr.  
Guelph, ON., N1H 4S2

The Accessibility Coordinator will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of feedback within two (2) weeks and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints. **Grain Farmers of Ontario's** feedback process is readily available to public and can be obtained by asking a **Grain Farmers of Ontario** employee or contacting the accessibility Coordinator.

## **MODIFICATIONS TO THIS AND OTHER POLICIES**

Any policy of **Grain Farmers of Ontario** that doesn't not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.