

## Martin Sheppard Fraser LLP Customer Service Accessibility Policy

This policy is consistent with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

### 1. Purpose and Commitment

Martin Sheppard Fraser LLP (the “Firm”) will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of its services to persons with disabilities are consistent with the following principles:

- goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- persons with disabilities are able to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients unless an alternate measure is necessary; and
- persons with disabilities have opportunities equal to others to use and benefit from the Firm’s goods or services.

### 2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

“**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*.

“**Guide Dog**” means a dog trained as a guide for a person who is blind or visually impaired.

“**Personal Assistive Device**” means any device a client may bring with them to a meeting.

“**Service Animal**” means an animal for a person with disabilities where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability or where the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that he or she requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

“**Support Person**” means, in relation to a person with disabilities, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services.

### **3. Application of Policy**

This policy applies to Firm services that are provided externally to the public or third parties.

The policy applies to all lawyers and staff at the Firm, agents, volunteers, clients, and visitors to the Firm. All areas of the Firm are accountable for providing accessibility to people with disabilities.

### **4. Providing goods and services to persons with disabilities**

The Firm is committed to excellence in serving all clients, including persons with disabilities, and will carry out its functions and responsibilities by:

- communicating with persons with disabilities in a manner that takes into account the person's disability;
- serving and accommodating persons with disabilities who use assistive devices and providing training to staff on how to use the assistive devices available, if any, on the Firm premises;
- ensuring that persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a Guide Dog or other Service Animal are permitted to enter the premises of the Firm with the animal and to keep the animal with them, unless the animal is excluded by law from the premises in which case alternative arrangements will be made; and
- ensuring that persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a Support Person are permitted to enter the Firm's premises with their Support Person and have access to their Support Person.

### **5. Support Persons**

Persons with disabilities may enter the Firm's premises with a Support Person and have access to the Support Person while on the premises.

The Firm may require persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a Support Person when on the premises, but only if a Support Person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with disabilities or the health or safety of others on the premises.

In order to maintain client confidentiality, a Support Person accompanying a person with disabilities will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Where the presence of undue influence or duress is a factor, a Support Person may be asked to step out in order for the client and their lawyer to conference privately.

### **6. Service Animals**

A person with disabilities may be accompanied by a Guide Dog or other Service Animal when on the Firm's premises.

### **7. Notice of temporary disruption**

The Firm will notify the public in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be posted conspicuously on the premises and on the website of the Firm, or communicated by such method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

## 8. Training for staff

The Firm will train its staff and other individuals who provide services to the public on the Firm's behalf on the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities. The training will be provided as soon as practicable after a staff member commences his or her duties and will include the following topics:

- an overview of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the requirements of the customer service standard, and the *Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities;
- how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a Guide Dog, Service Animal or a Support Person;
- how to use or access the equipment or devices available on the Firm's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities;
- what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty in accessing the Firm's goods and services;
- the Firm's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

The firm will provide training on an ongoing basis when changes are made to the Firm's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

## 9. Feedback process

The Firm welcomes any feedback regarding its provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities. Individuals may provide their feedback in person, by telephone, fax, regular mail or email. All feedback will be directed to Andrew Larmand.

Contact information:           4701 St. Clair Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, P.O. Box 900  
Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6V7  
Telephone: 905.354.1611 extension 272  
Fax: 905-354-5540  
[larmand@msflawyers.com](mailto:larmand@msflawyers.com)

All feedback will be reviewed and, where necessary and practicable, action will be taken to correct any issues identified. Customers can expect a reply within 30 days if a response is requested. Complaints will be addressed according to the Firm's regular complaint management procedures.

## 10. Modifications to this or other policies

Changes will not be made to this policy unless the impact of the changes on persons with disabilities has been considered.

Any Firm policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities will be modified or removed.

### **11. Questions about this policy**

If anyone has a question about this policy, or if the purpose of the policy is not understood, please contact Andrew Larmand.

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Telephone: 905.354.1611 extension 272  
Fax: 905-354-5540  
[larmand@msflawyers.com](mailto:larmand@msflawyers.com)

### **12. Maintenance of documents**

The Firm will maintain documents describing its policies, practices and procedures and, upon request, shall give a copy of a document to any person. The documents will include policies, practices and procedures with respect to the following:

- use of support persons;
- use of assistive devices;
- use of Guide Dogs or Service Animals;
- the steps to be taken in connection with a temporary disruption of accessibility features;
- the training policy, including a summary of the contents of the training and details of when the training is to be provided;
- records of the training provided under this policy, including the dates on which the training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided;
- the feedback process.

The Firm will notify persons to whom it provides goods and services of its policies by posting the information at a conspicuous place on the Firm premises, on the Firm website or by such method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

When required under this policy to give a copy of a document to a person with disabilities, the Firm will provide the document or information in a format that takes into account the person's disabilities. We will consult with the individual making the request to determine the format to be used for the document or information.