

Accessibility Standards



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1. OVERVIEW STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Hydro One Ombudsman (“the Ombudsman”) is committed to providing a high level of customer service that is equitable and accessible to all who contact the Ombudsman, including persons with Disabilities.
- 1.2 This set of standards sets out the framework for compliance with accessibility requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005* (“AODA”) and the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, which addresses accessibility standards in the areas of information and communication, employment, transportation, design of public spaces and customer service.
- 1.3 These accessibility standards are in addition to obligations under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (“the Code”). The Ombudsman’s Office recognizes that these accessibility standards do not act as a substitute for its legal obligations under the Code.
- 1.4 The Ombudsman’s Office takes a person-centric approach to accessibility that respects principles of Dignity, Independence, equal opportunity and Integration of persons with Disabilities.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 This set of standards outlines the Ombudsman’s commitment to accessible customer service standards and what individuals may expect when they interact with the Ombudsman’s Office.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This set of standards applies to services provided by the Ombudsman's Office in the course of its business operations.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **"Accessible Formats"** means large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats that may be used by persons with Disabilities as defined by the regulations to the AODA.
- 4.2 **"Assistive Device"** means a medical or technical aid, communication device that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional abilities of people with Disabilities that enables them to perform everyday tasks or activities.
- 4.3 **"Barrier"** means anything that prevents a person with a Disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their Disability. Barriers may be physical, architectural, information or communication barriers, attitudinal barriers, technological barriers or may pertain to a policy, standard or practice.
- 4.4 **"Complainant"** means a customer, stakeholder and any affected party or group who has dealings with Hydro One with respect to services and makes a complaint to the Ombudsman's Office. A Complainant may include someone acting as a representative on behalf of a Complainant.
- 4.5 **"Dignity"** means treating all individuals such that they are valued, respected and deserving of services as any other individual who contacts the Ombudsman's Office.
- 4.6 **"Disability"** is defined by the AODA as follows:
- (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*.

4.7 “Hydro One” means Hydro One Inc. and its subsidiaries (together referred to as “Hydro One”).

4.8 “Independence” means services will be provided in a way that allows persons with a Disability to do things on their own and make their own choices without unnecessary control or interference from others.

4.9 “Integration” means that people with Disabilities can benefit from services in the same place and in the same or similar ways as others who interact with the Ombudsman’s Office.

4.10 “Ombudsman’s Office” means the Hydro One Ombudsman and the Ombudsman’s staff.

4.11 “Service Animal” means an animal that helps its handler maintain Independence and may include, but is not limited to the following types of situations:

- Assisting a person with a visual impairment to navigate spaces;
- Alerting a person with diabetes about low blood sugar levels;
- Helping to protect a person with epilepsy during seizures;
- Calming a person with autism when there is too much sensory stimulation;
- Alerting a person with a hearing Disability to sounds; or
- Guiding a person with a physical Disability around obstacles.

4.12 “Support Person” means another person who accompanies an individual with a Disability to help them with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services. This may include a family member, a friend, a paid professional or volunteer.

5. PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

5.1 The Ombudsman’s Office will work with Complainants to meet their accessibility needs when those needs have been identified. Complainants and the Ombudsman’s Office have certain responsibilities:

5.1.1 Complainant Responsibilities

- 5.1.1.1** Individuals have a responsibility to inform the Ombudsman's Office of their accessibility needs in order for the Ombudsman's Office to respond appropriately.

5.1.2 The Ombudsman's Office Responsibilities

- 5.1.2.1** The Ombudsman's Office will consult with the individual making an accessibility request to better understand their needs.
- 5.1.2.2** The Ombudsman's Office will explore options when accessibility needs are identified, while maintaining confidentiality and respecting the Dignity of the individual.
- 5.1.2.3** The Ombudsman's Office will endeavour to provide communications that use clear and plain language.
- 5.1.2.4** When a request has been made for information to be provided in an Accessible Format, the Ombudsman's Office will make reasonable efforts to respond to the request in a timely manner.
- 5.1.2.5** If a person appears to be experiencing challenges, the Ombudsman's Office will ask the individual what the best way is to assist them.

6. USE OF SUPPORT PERSON

- 6.1** Complainants who require a Support Person have a right to have a Support Person with them when accessing services from the Ombudsman's Office.
- 6.2** The Ombudsman's Office will confirm with a Complainant that they provide consent prior to disclosing confidential information to a Support Person or in the presence of a Support Person. The Support Person is required to maintain confidentiality.
- 6.3** The Ombudsman's Office will speak directly to the person who has the Disability, not their Support Person (unless otherwise specified by the Complainant).
- 6.4** As the Ombudsman's Office is neutral, it is precluded from acting as a Support Person for any party.

7. SERVICE ANIMALS

- 7.1** The Ombudsman's Office physical space will be accessible to persons with disabilities who may require the use of a Service Animal, unless otherwise excluded by law.
- 7.2** A Complainant who is accompanied by a Service Animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.
- 7.3** When it is not readily apparent that an animal is being used by a Complainant for reasons relating to their Disability, the Ombudsman's Office may request verification from the Complainant.
- 7.4** If an animal is legally excluded from accessing the Ombudsman's Office physical space, the Ombudsman's Office will explore alternative methods to deliver services in a manner consistent with this Policy.

8. TRAINING

- 8.1** The Ombudsman's Office will receive accessibility training in compliance with the AODA. Accessibility training will include training on the following areas:
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of Disability;
 - How to interact with persons with Disabilities who use an Assistive Device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other Service Animal or the assistance of a Support Person;
 - How to use equipment or devices available on the premises or otherwise provided that may help reduce Barriers for the provision of goods or services to a person with a Disability; and
 - What to do if a person with a particular type of Disability is having difficulty accessing the Ombudsman's Office's services due to Barriers.
- 8.2** Completion records will be maintained to ensure all employees comply with the training when delivered.

9. FEEDBACK PROCESS

- 9.1. The Ombudsman's Office values feedback about its standards, practices and procedures from those who interact with the Ombudsman's Office. Individuals with questions or concerns about accessibility may contact the Ombudsman's Office at the contact information below:

Mail: Office of the Hydro One Ombudsman
483 Bay St., South Tower
Toronto, ON M5G 2P5
Email: Ombudsman@HydroOne.com
Phone: 1-844-608-8756 or 416-345-1505
TTY: 416-345-5839
Fax: 416-345-6129

- 9.2. Any feedback will be reviewed by the Ombudsman's Office and a response provided as may be appropriate in the circumstances.

10. REVIEW OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

- 11.1 These Standards replace previous versions. These Standards will be reviewed and amended as may be required by the Ombudsman's Office to ensure compliance with AODA requirements. The Ombudsman's Office shall also update the procedures that accompany these Standards as needed.

11. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 12.1 These Standards are accompanied by related procedures. Other documents related to these Standards are noted below.

| Related Document | Effective Date of Document | Applicable Sections |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Customer Service Standards | March 14, 2022 | s.9 |
| Terms of Reference | August 11, 2020 | s. 22 |

Approval Date: October 31, 2023