

SC OFFICE MEMORANDA - Section No:	<u>3</u>
Title of Memorandum:	<u>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (Customer Service Standard)</u>
Issue Date:	<u>June 2021</u>
Responsible Committees:	<u>Human Resources and Health & Safety Committee</u>

Introduction and Purpose

Stern Cohen LLP (referred to as Stern Cohen or “the Firm”) recognizes and is committed to upholding its responsibility to develop, implement, and maintain a customer service standard for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Ministry of Labour’s Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its subset, the AODA Customer Service Standard, effective January 1, 2012. Included in the Firm’s responsibility is the requirement for the education and training of its partners, employees and others who may provide goods and services to persons with disabilities, during their interactions with the public or third parties on behalf of the Firm.

Definition of Disability

The AODA defines disability as: any degree of physical infirmity, malformation, or disfigurement; a condition of mental impairment, or developmental disability; a learning disability or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in the understanding or use of symbols or spoken language; or a mental disorder. It may also include an injury or disability for which benefits are received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (1997). The definition also includes disabilities of differing severity, visible, as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities which may come and go.

Scope

This policy applies to all partners, employees and others who deal with the public or other third parties on Stern Cohen’s behalf.

Commitment

Stern Cohen strives to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Similarly, the Firm is committed to giving persons with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way as other customers, without compromising on excellence in service.

To accomplish this, we first strive to adopt a respectful, consultative approach for persons with disabilities, to determine how they wish to be served, to benefit from the same excellence in client services described above. Our specific commitments are:

1. **Communication** – We strive to communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account the person’s disability. We train employees on how to interact and communicate with persons with disabilities.
2. **Telephone and Computer Communications** – We train employees to communicate with customers over the telephone, by facsimile machine, or by email, using a) clear and plain language and b) by speaking slowly and clearly.

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3. **Assistive devices** – We are committed to serving persons with disabilities who use assistive devices to access our goods and services. We ensure that our employees are trained and are familiar with assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities when gaining access to our goods or services.
4. **Billing** – We are committed to providing accessible invoices to our customers. Invoices will be provided in an alternative format as may be reasonable in the circumstance upon request. We will answer any questions customers may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone, by facsimile, or by electronic mail.
5. **Use of Service Animals** – We are committed to welcoming persons with disabilities who require accompaniment by a service animal on our premises. We will also ensure that all partners, employees and others dealing with the public or third parties on our behalf are properly trained in how to interact with persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that any offsite event venues are compliant with Stern Cohen’s commitment regarding service animals. It is recognized that representatives of other event venues may need to be consulted about their readiness to accept service animals. A decision will be made on the suitability of that venue overall.
6. **Use of Support Persons** – We are committed to welcoming persons 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 Stern Cohen’s premises or offsite event venues 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 premises operated by Stern Cohen, or other premises that are hosted by Stern Cohen for event purposes.
7. **Service Disruption Notification** – Stern Cohen shall provide all customers including those customers who are persons with disabilities, with a notice of service disruption (temporary or extended), noting information on the service disruption, the reason for the disruption, its estimated duration, and any alternative action such as a change to services, locations, or facilities. Stern Cohen is committed to providing regular updates on any service disruptions.

Procedures

Education and Training – Stern Cohen will provide training on the provision of services to individuals with disabilities to all partners, employees and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf. Training will include the following:

- Coverage of the legislation, including the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the requirements of its subset, the AODA Customer Service Standard.
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities, including needs determination.

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- How to use any assistive devices on our premises that may help provide services to persons with disabilities.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities requiring assistive devices, service animals or support persons.
- Remedies should a person with a disability have difficulty accessing Stern Cohen's goods and services.
- Stern Cohen's policies, practices, and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

Training will be considered ongoing, as it will occur when changes are made to these policies, practices, and procedures.

AODA Task Force - The firm has appointed the following team members to help implement our AODA policies and practices:

- Evelyn Hui, HR Specialist |416-967-5100 ext. 264 | hui@sterncohen.com
- Julie James, Marketing Director |416-967-5100 ext. 252 | james@sterncohen.com
- Alicia Forgenie, Administrator |416-967-5100 ext. 232 | forgenie@sterncohen.com
- Mauro Pambianco, COO |416-967-5100 ext. 120 | mpambianco@sterncohen.com

Customer Feedback - Should a customer wish to discuss an aspect of Stern Cohen's service to persons with disabilities, they are encouraged to reach out to us by:

- Visiting reception in person when our office is open
- Sending an email to our AODA Task Force care of hr@sterncohen.com
- Calling our reception at 416-967-5100 x101, by telephone, TTY, or by facsimile
- Completing our online Customer Feedback Form available on this link:
<https://www.sterncohen.com/aoda-feedback-form/>*
- Or writing to:

AODA Task Force
Stern Cohen LLP
45 St. Clair Avenue West, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M4V 1L3

*Note that our Customer Feedback Form is also available by contacting us through any of the means noted above.

Any forms should be submitted to the attention of the AODA Task Force and a response can be expected within 15 business days.

Policy Modifications

Stern Cohen is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. This policy and any related policies will be developed or updated to support this commitment.