

# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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## January 2014 to January 2018

**This document is available in alternate formats upon request**

In 2005, the province developed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The Act is available on the [Government of Ontario e-Laws website](#).

The goal of the Act is to make Ontario an accessible province for persons with disabilities by 2025 through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards. AODA applies to every person and organization in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors of Ontario who:

- Provide goods and services or facilities
- Employs one or more persons
- Offers accommodation
- Owns or occupies a building, structure, or premises.

### **Horizon Utilities' Employment Accessibility Commitment**

Horizon Utilities Corporation complies with the AODA, 2005 and adheres to the Accessibility Standard for Employment. The Accessibility Standard for Employment helps Ontario businesses and organizations make accessibility a regular part of finding, hiring and supporting employees with disabilities. Horizon Utilities is committed to providing a barrier-free environment by identifying, removing and preventing barriers that may limit people with disabilities. Most importantly, the core principles of the Act – independence, dignity, integration, equality of opportunity for people with disabilities – are aligned with Horizon Utilities' desire to provide persons with disabilities opportunities equal to others to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services provided on behalf of Horizon Utilities.

### **Horizon Utilities' Accessibility Principles**

- To support initiatives that work to remove barriers and promote or increase equitable access.
- To promote a healthy, barrier-free work environment where employees can participate fully in all aspects of their job.
- To be a great place to work that is accessible to all employees, associates, customers, stakeholders and people with disabilities.
- To maintain a comprehensive Accessibility Policy, Work Procedure and a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

- Through Horizon Utilities' ongoing work, provide a range of accessibility services and support for people with disabilities.
- To ensure that Horizon Utilities' information and communications to employees, associates, customers, and stakeholders are accessible.

### **Complying with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation**

Horizon Utilities has been in compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation since 2012. We continue to ensure that in Horizon Utilities' day-to-day activities all the requirements of this Regulation are fulfilled and in keeping with the principles of dignity, independence, equality and integration. For example:

- Horizon Utilities ensures that all new employees receive training on the requirements of the Regulation, with particular emphasis on how to serve and communicate with all people.
- The public is encouraged to provide feedback using the "Accessibility" area of Horizon Utilities' website [www.horizonutilities.com](http://www.horizonutilities.com). All feedback is sent to the appropriate manager for review and any resulting action is kept confidential.

### **Complying with the Requirements of the Accessible Employment Standards Regulation**

Horizon Utilities meets the requirements of Section 27 of the Accessible Employment Standards within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). Under this section, we are required to provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability. If the employee requires assistance in case of an emergency, and has consented to have information about his or her accommodation needs shared, Horizon Utilities will provide the workplace emergency response information to the person designated by Horizon Utilities to provide assistance to the employee.

- Horizon Utilities employees have been notified of Horizon Utilities' commitment to work with them to create individual workplace emergency response information.
- A memo is sent once a year to all employees, asking if they have accommodation needs.
- Alternate formats are used if required by specific employees.
- Horizon Utilities' respectful process ensures privacy for people who self-identify as needing accommodation.

### **Introducing the Horizon Utilities Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

- This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was created to comply with Section 4 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, which requires large organizations like Horizon Utilities to establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan.

## **Horizon Utilities' Detailed Plan: Strategies and Milestones**

### **2014 Requirements:**

#### **A Summary of Accessibility Progress in 2014**

In 2014, Horizon Utilities will ensure that it continues to comply with existing accessibility requirements under both the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). We are also in compliance with the General Requirements of the IASR to create an accessibility policy for the IASR and Horizon Utilities' first multi-year accessibility plan. In addition, new websites and content on those sites will be WCAG 2.0 Level A compliant. Self-Service Kiosks will also be designed, procured or acquired with accessibility in mind.

### **IASR General Requirements:**

#### **Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

- A policy for the Customer Service Standard and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation is posted on Horizon Utilities' internal and external websites. Print copies and alternate formats are available upon request.
- Horizon Utilities' commitment to accessibility is stated in its accessibility policy and this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. It includes goals which encompass the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.
- Completion of an Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

#### **Self-Service Kiosks**

Horizon Utilities shall have regard to accessibility for persons with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

#### **Information and Communication Standard**

##### **Accessible Websites and Web Content:**

Beginning January 1, 2014, all new internet websites or websites undergoing a major refresh, and web content on those sites must conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or WCAG at the 2.0A level.

- Internal expertise has been developed for maintaining on-going accessibility requirements for all internet websites and content.
- Horizon Utilities will contract external website expertise as required.

## **2015 Requirements:**

### **A Summary of Accessibility Progress in 2015**

2015 is the year that large organizations like Horizon Utilities must ensure that employees and volunteers are trained on the IASR and Human Rights Code. We must also ensure that Horizon Utilities' feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities and provided in accessible formats and communication supports on request.

### **IASR General Requirements:**

Horizon Utilities will provide training by January 1, 2015 on the accessibility standards referred to in this Regulation and on the Human Rights Code. The training will target every person who deals with members of the public or who participates in developing Horizon Utilities' policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to the public; including all associates, contractors and others who provide service on Horizon Utilities' behalf.

- Horizon Utilities will provide the required training to its employees, as appropriate, based on the duties of that employee.
- Horizon Utilities will maintain records of training including the dates and number of people trained.
- New employees and volunteers will receive training on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation and the Human Rights Code during their orientation period.

### **Accessible Information and Communications**

#### **Feedback:**

Section 11 of the Standard requires that by January 1, 2015, all Horizon Utilities' feedback processes be accessible to persons with disabilities. This involves providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication support upon request. Horizon Utilities must also notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication support.

- Horizon Utilities accepts feedback through the Accessibility section on its website, email, or by telephone.
- Alternate formats are available upon request for all feedback forms.

## **2016 Requirements:**

### **A Summary of Accessibility Progress in 2016**

By January 1, 2016 all of Horizon Utilities' employment practices must be accessible. While many of Horizon Utilities' existing employment practices already meet requirements under the Accessible Employment Standards, we will ensure that all Horizon Utilities' employment practices throughout the employment life cycle meet the standards of accessibility. We are also required to provide or arrange for information in accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities on request.

### **Information and Communication Standard**

#### **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports:**

Section 12 of the IASR requires, by January 1, 2016, that all large organizations provide or arrange for information in accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities on request. Horizon Utilities will ensure that requested information is:

- Provided in a timely manner
- Provided at no extra cost
- Provided following consultation with the person making the request to determine the most appropriate format or support

#### **Accessible Employment:**

Horizon Utilities will ensure compliance with the 2012 requirement to provide employees with individualized emergency response plans. New employees with accommodation needs will develop individual emergency accommodation plans with their managers. Revisions will be made to the plans for existing employees if their accommodation needs change.

Other requirements for this Standard come into effect for Horizon Utilities by January 1, 2016. Horizon Utilities will ensure that it has met these requirements by that date and has complied with the intent of this Standard to ensure accessibility is incorporated into the entire employment life cycle.

#### **Recruitment:**

In compliance with Sections 22, 23 and 24:

- Horizon Utilities will notify its employees and the public about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities during the interview process.
- Horizon Utilities makes every effort to ensure job postings are available electronically and are printable to ensure that potential applicants with accommodation needs are aware of the postings.
- Horizon Utilities will notify successful applicants of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when offering employment. This notice will be included in the letter of offer to the successful applicant.

### **Informing Employees with Disabilities of Available Support:**

In compliance with Section 25:

- Horizon Utilities will inform all employees of its policies for supporting employees with disabilities, including providing employment-related accommodations.
- New employees will receive this information during the orientation process.
- All employees will be provided with updated information whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations.
- Employees will be assured that their privacy is respected and that any sharing of information about their accommodation needs will be discussed with them and plans for communication made with their consent.

### **Accessible Formats and Communication Support for Employees:**

In compliance with Section 26:

- Horizon Utilities will consult with employees who have disabilities to provide them with the accessible formats and communication supports they require to do their job effectively.

### **Individual Accommodation Plans:**

In compliance with Section 28, Horizon Utilities will develop written accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The following will be considered when developing each plan:

1. The inclusion of an employee requesting accommodation in the development of their individual accommodation plan.
2. Assessing an employee on an individual basis.
3. The role of an outside medical or other expert, at the employer's expense, to assist in determining if and how the accommodation can be achieved.
4. The involvement of a representative from the workplace in the development of the accommodation plan, upon request of the employee.
5. The privacy protection of the employee's personal information.
6. The frequency and manner in which the individual accommodation plan will be reviewed and updated.
7. The format of the individual accommodation plan based on the employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

All accommodation plans are private. Each plan will include information on accessible formats and communication supports required, individual emergency response requirements and any other accommodation needed.

**Return to Work:**

In compliance with Section 29:

- Horizon Utilities has a return to work process (Policy 3.35).
- Throughout the process, the Healthy Workplace and Safety team works closely with the employee and his or her manager.
- Horizon Utilities ensures that managers understand the accommodations being made as well as privacy/communication concerns and agreements around return to work accessibility requirements.
- Horizon Utilities will formally document this process in compliance with Section 29 of these standards.

**Performance Management and Career Development:**

In compliance with Sections 30 and 31:

- Horizon Utilities will review the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities with regard to performance management and career development – in ways that take their accessibility needs into account, including performance plans in accessible formats as requested.

**2017 Requirements:****A Summary of Accessibility Progress**

When making major changes to existing public spaces, larger organizations like Horizon Utilities must meet requirements under Section 80 of the IASR related to: exterior paths of travel, off-street parking, public spaces for obtaining information and maintenance of accessible public spaces.

**Design of Public Spaces:****Exterior Paths of Travel**

Horizon Utilities will ensure:

- Outdoor sidewalks and walkways, ramps, stairs and curb ramps follow minimum height requirements.
- Slopes and sidewalks will not exceed maximum ratio requirements.
- The surface area of ramps and stairs will be firm, stable and slip-resistant.

**Accessible Parking**

Horizon Utilities will ensure off-street parking provides:

- Wider parking spaces for people who use mobility aids such as wheelchairs.
- Standard-width parking spaces for people who use mobility assistive devices such as canes, crutches and walkers.
- Availability of accessible parking spaces compliant with the total number of existing parking spaces.
- Access aisles to allow persons with disabilities to get in and out of their vehicles.

## **Obtaining Services**

Service Counters: Horizon Utilities will ensure:

- At least one service counter is accessible to people who use mobility aids.
- Service counters are low enough for someone sitting in a mobility aid.
- Service counters have sufficient clear space for someone sitting in a mobility aid, including space for the person's knees.
- Accessible service counters are identified with accessible signage.

Waiting Areas: Horizon Utilities will ensure:

- Within waiting areas with seating fixed to the floor at least three per cent of seating is accessible to someone using a mobility aid.
- All waiting areas have at least one accessible seating space.

## **Maintenance**

Horizon Utilities will ensure:

- Horizon Utilities' Multi-Year Accessibility Plan includes preventative and emergency maintenance procedures for the accessible parts of Horizon Utilities' public spaces, including posting of regular maintenance schedules and notifying people about alternatives.
- Procedures for handling temporary disruptions in service when an accessible part of Horizon Utilities' public spaces stops working are added to the Plan.

## **2018 Requirements:**

### **A Summary of Accessibility Progress**

There are no new AODA requirements for Horizon Utilities in 2018. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will expire, and the company will prepare a new multi-year plan to begin in 2019.

### **We Welcome Your Feedback on our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

Horizon Utilities values your input to ensure that our Plan includes ways to reduce or eliminate any barriers you may be experiencing that could have a potential to prevent customers from accessing our services. Let us know how this Plan meets your needs and possible areas of improvement. Please contact us using one of the options below.

- Email us at: [accessibility@horizonutilities.com](mailto:accessibility@horizonutilities.com)
- Mail your comments to: 55 John Street North, Hamilton, Ontario L8R 3M8
- Call us at: 1-866-458-1236