

## ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBANS ACT INFO FOR MRFA MEMBERS

The province of Manitoba has created [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) to improve accessibility. The [Customer Service Accessibility Standard](#) is the first standard introduced under the Act and the deadline for compliance for all private and non-profit organizations is **November 1, 2018**.

As a service industry, we know our members already strive to provide a welcoming and accessible space for guests. The MRFA is committed to keeping our members informed as we learn more on this legislation and compliance. Below is some useful information to help you ensure your business is in compliance.

In relation to businesses and organizations like those of our members, the Act's website states:

To meet the Customer Service Standard, organizations must:

- meet the communication needs of customers, clients or members
- allow assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, walkers and oxygen tanks
- welcome support people, who are there to assist
- welcome people with service animals
- ensure accessibility is maintained as intended (ramps, wide aisles, removal of clutter)
- let customers know when accessible features and services are not available
- invite customers to provide feedback
- train staff on accessible customer service, including reasonable accommodations under The Human Rights Code (Manitoba).
- organizations with more than 20 employees must document their customer service policy and provide notice that it is available on request.

See the Act's webpage outlining the above practices [here](#).

Many of the practices outlined above are already common among service industry businesses, but under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, they are now law. For more info on how to comply with the Customer Service Standard, see the [Employer's Handbook](#). To see sample policies to help you create yours, see the [Sample Accessible Customer Service Policy](#).

## ON SERVICE VS COMFORT ANIMALS AND PETS

Many restaurants have expressed confusion on how to identify service animals and pointed out that there is confusion among the public regarding the right they have to enter an establishment with a pet or comfort animal.

While it is the law to welcome service animals, comfort animals and pets are not considered service animals in Manitoba and there are no laws stating comfort animals or pets must be welcomed into businesses. The Manitoba [Humans Rights Code](#) states that " 'service animal' means an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability."

The issue is further complicated by the fact that there is no mandatory registry for service animals in Manitoba and therefore there is no documented way to verify service animals. Some training services do provide certificates or other documentation for service animals, and some patrons may be willing to share this documentation as proof, but it is not required for them to provide this documentation. If a patron states they have a service animal, they must be welcomed into the business.

According to the Human Rights Commission, and accessibility requirements, businesses may ask patrons whether the animal accompanying them is a service animal trained to help with a disability but cannot ask what that disability is. Businesses can also warn patrons that the law requires them to ensure they maintain control over the service animal. If a patron's service animal is not behaving in a well-trained manner (for example, whining or wandering), a business has the right to ask the patron to leave. Although it is not required by law, you may wish to document the circumstances.

For more information about The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, visit their website or contact the [Disabilities Issues Office](#).

Links (in the order they appear above):

<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/index.html>

[http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/\\_pdf-regs.php?reg=171/2015](http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=171/2015)

<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/customer-service-standard.html>

<http://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/employers%20handbook.pdf>

[http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/dio\\_sample\\_accessible\\_customer\\_service\\_policy.pdf](http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/dio_sample_accessible_customer_service_policy.pdf)

<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php>

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/dio/>