

Accessibility Policy

Township of Springwater

A. Authority

As of January 1, 2008 the Ontario Customer Services Standard became law. Businesses and organizations that provide goods or services to people are required to make their customer service operations accessible to those with disabilities.

On June 3, 2011 the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation, which encompasses standards for Employment, Information and Communications, and Transportation, became law under provincial legislation. The Township of Springwater is deemed to be a large organization with over fifty (50) employees.

Businesses and organizations will become accessible by the identification and removal of barriers through operational practices, policies and procedures, communications, and staff training.

B. Policy Statement

The Township of Springwater is committed to the promotion of an accessible municipality in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and meeting the accessibility needs of persons with a disability in a timely manner.

C. Purpose

The purpose of the Accessibility Policy is to develop, implement, and maintain policies, which govern how the municipality will achieve accessibility, especially as required through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. To accomplish this, the Township will:

- a. Document in writing all policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meet other document requirements set out in the standard.
- b. Notify customers that documents required under the Accessible Customer Service Standard are available upon request.
- c. When providing documents under the Accessibility Customer Service Standard to a person with a disability, the information will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

All departments at the Township of Springwater will use reasonable efforts to ensure that the policies, procedures and practices established in the Accessibility Policy are consistent with the following core principles:

- a. Dignity.
- b. Independence.
- c. Integration (except when alternate measures are not necessary to meet the needs of people with disabilities).
- d. Equal opportunity.

The purpose is to provide consistent service to all members of the public who seek the services of the Township. This policy will also assist in accomplishing the goal of making Ontario completely accessible by 2025.

D. Scope

As per the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, this policy applies to all employees of the Township of Springwater including Council, full time employees, part time employees, and volunteers.

E. Definitions

Accessible Communications means depending on the situation and the person's needs, the format of communication may be altered to better suit the customer. The communication can be made more accessible in various ways including, but not limited to, changing the usual method of communication or using an assistive device for service.

Communication means the process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information.

Council means the Council for The Corporation of The Township of Springwater.

Customer Service means the provision of goods or services that members of the public are allowed to use.

Disability means (as defined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005):

- 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.

Personal Assistive Device means an assistive device that those with a disability may bring with them, such as a walker or a personal oxygen tank, which aid in their day-to-day functions.

Principles of Dignity means that policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients, who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. Service delivery needs to take into account how people with disabilities can effectively access and use services.

Principle of Equal Opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the provision of goods and services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service and they should not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience. Equal opportunity can best be reached by taking steps to ensure that individual needs are taken into account when providing goods or services. Principles may need to be balanced in order to achieve the outcomes that meet the needs of the person with a disability.

Principle of Independence means freedom from control or influence of others and the freedom to make your own choices. It may also mean the freedom to do things in your own way.

Principle of Integration means services that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. Integration means that policies, practices and procedures are

designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities. At times when integration does not serve the needs of all people with disabilities, it may be necessary to use alternate measures to provide goods or services.

Providing Services means providing goods or services to members of the public.

Public Sector includes provincial government, municipal government, universities, colleges, hospitals, health care, school boards, and public transportation organizations.

Service Animal is:

- a. An animal, for the purpose of this policy, is a service animal for a person with a disability,
- b. Means it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability, or
- c. Means the person provides identification or documentation from a recognized authority.

Support Person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

Township means The Corporation of The Township of Springwater.

F. Accessible Customer Service Standard

The following standard applies to all business and organizations that provide goods or services to the public, and have at least one employee. The standard is for businesses and organizations in the private, non-profit, and public sector.

Communication and Alternative Forms of Communication

Communication is the process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. Depending on the situation and the person's needs, there are a variety of ways to make communications more accessible. These include:

- a. Making the original communication more accessible.
- b. Changing the usual method of communication.
- c. Using assistive devices or services.

Communication should be offered in a way that takes the person's disability into account. All employees will consider how the disability affects the way that the customer expresses, receives or processes communication. The goal is to communicate in an effective way.

Taking someone's disability into account requires an employee to take that particular individual's needs and circumstances into consideration. Assumptions are not to be made based on their disability.

Different people with the same disability may communicate in different ways because of different skills or resources. Where possible, it will be helpful to ask the person directly how to best communicate with them.

Where appropriate, documents are to be created in plain language so that it will be easier to read for those with certain learning disabilities.

To meet individual communication needs, the information may be offered in a different medium. Examples of different mediums of communication may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Large print.
- b. Braille
- c. Strategies to offer phone service rather than in person service.
- d. Allowance of email rather than postal notices, or use of other technological advances.
- e. Plain language, simplified summaries of materials.
- f. Sign language interpreter.

If a customer requires an alternative method of communication, notice must be provided to the Township to allow an opportunity to re-create the necessary documents.

Springwater's website is a key channel of communication for the Township. Many people with disabilities use computers and the internet. Some people with disabilities use assistive devices such as screen readers (devices that speak the contents of the screen), speech input systems (which allow you to talk into a microphone to control the computer and enter text) and a variety of other devices that operate with computers.

The Township's website is to be developed in a way that considers how assistive devices operate and how people with disabilities use them. The site will be accessible to people with disabilities.

Use of Personal Assistive Devices, Service Animals and Support Persons

Those with a disability may use personal assistive devices to access the Township's goods and services. Personal assistive devices may include, but are not limited to, things such as walkers, white canes, note-taking devices, and personal oxygen tanks.

A person is permitted to be accompanied by their guide dog or other service animal on Township premises. Presently, there are no municipal by-laws restricting certain breeds of animals or dogs from the municipality.

Some people rely on support persons for certain services or assistance. A support person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or friend of the person with a disability. Those persons with a disability are permitted to be accompanied by their support person on Township premises that are open to the public. The support person may be hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Where admission fees are charged, the Township will provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability. Notice could be provided through various outlets including:

- a. Posting on public boards at various Township facilities.
- b. On the Township website in the appropriate areas.
- c. Included on any advertisement promoting the specific event where an admission fee may be charged.

Disruption of Service Notification

The Township will provide proper and adequate notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use are temporarily disrupted. When the Township is aware of the disruption, notices will be posted two (2) weeks prior to the start of the disruption. If the disruption is unexpected, the notice will be posted as soon as possible.

Notices of temporary disruption must include:

- a. Reason(s) for the disruption.

- b. Length disruption it is expected to last.
- c. Alternative facilities to use (if applicable).
- d. Other alternative measures (if applicable).

Notices may be posted:

- a. At appropriate doors/boards of applicable facilities.
- b. On the Township website.
- c. If appropriate, in various media outlets such as local newspapers.

Customer Feedback

If anyone has a concern regarding the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities they can complete the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form.

Upon receipt of an Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form, the form will be delivered to the member of the Management Team from the appropriate department identified. The Management Team member, in consultation with the CAO, and any other appropriate staff members, will address the content of the form and attempt to resolve the concern. The comment form will also be copied to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee who will offer assistance with the concern addressed when applicable.

If appropriate, the comments noted will be received formally by Council following proper procedural guidelines.

If appropriate, the member of the Management Team or their designate, will contact the author of the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form to discuss the resolution of the concern.

When communicating with a person with a disability, the member of the Management Team or their designate will take into account the person's disability and respond in a way that is appropriate.

The comment forms will be reviewed after their use to ensure that they are fulfilling their objective of providing an accessible outlet for concerns regarding accessible customer service within the Township.

If a member of the public would like to make a comment regarding the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities, and would not like to complete the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form, they can dictate their

comments to members of staff (in person, over the phone, via email, etc.). The member of staff who receives the comments will write the comments on the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form and submit it to the appropriate departmental Management Team member.

G. Information and Communication Standard

Feedback

The Township will ensure that feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provisions of accessible communications and support, upon request. Feedback can be received online, through writing or verbally.

Accessible Formats and Communication Support

Upon request, the Township will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with a disability. The formats will be provided in a timely manner and take into account the person's disability needs. There will be no additional cost charged to the person to provide an accessible format. The Township will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. Final determination as to which accessible format or communication support used rests with the Township. The Township will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Emergency Procedure, Plans or Public Safety Information

The Township has in place several different emergency procedures, plans and public safety information. Upon request, public information regarding the Township's emergency procedures, plans or public safety information will be provided in an accessible format. This information will be made as soon as practicable upon request.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

The Township will ensure the official municipal website and web content conforms with the accessibility guidelines as outlined by the World Wide Web Consortium. Except where meeting this requirement is not practicable, this conformity applies to websites, web content and web-based application that are controlled directly or through a contractual relationship that allows for the modification of the product and to web content.

H. Employment Standard

Employment standards apply to paid employees, not volunteers and other non-paid individuals.

Recruitment

Through the recruitment process, all interested applicants will be notified about the availability of accommodations for applicants with a disability. A standard statement of commitment will be provided on all Township job postings.

During the recruitment process, applicants selected for an assessment or selection process will be notified that accommodations are available upon request. If an applicant requests an accommodation, the Township will provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's accessibility needs. The decision as to which accommodation is to be provided rests with the municipality.

When making offers of employment, the Township will notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

Accessible Formats and Communication Support for Employees

The Township will inform employees of its policies used to support employees with disabilities. This information will also be provided to new employees as soon as practicable after they begin their employment. Any changes to policies will be communicated to all applicable employees through communication channels or through formats that take into account the employee's disability, as requested.

The Township will consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats, and communication supports that an employee may need to perform their work. This will also include the communication of information needed while performing in the workplace.

The Township will consult with the employee making a request for an accessible format or communication support to determine the suitable format. The final determination as to which accessible format or communication support acquired will rest with the Township.

Workplace Emergency Response Information

At the written request of the employee, the Township will provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary and the Township is aware of the need for accommodation.

If an employee requested an Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Plan and identified the need for assistance from a colleague(s), the Township will provide the information to the designated colleague(s). This information will be provided to the designated colleague(s) as soon as practicable after the Township becomes aware of the need for accommodation.

The employee's Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Plan will be reviewed when:

- a. The employee moves to a different location in the organization.
- b. The overall accommodation needs of the employee changes (as notified to the Township by the employee).
- c. The Township's general emergency response policies are reviewed.

Documented Individual Accommodation Plans

A written process for the development and maintenance of documented individual accommodation plans shall be developed for employees with disabilities. If requested, these plans shall include information regarding accessible formats and communication supports. If requested, the plans shall include individualized workplace emergency response information.

Return to Work Process

The Township shall have in place a documented return to work process for employees returning to work due to disability and requiring disability related accommodations. This return to work process shall outline the steps that the Township may make to facilitate their return to work. The Township will continue to maintain its commitment to make every reasonable effort to provide temporary modified or suitable alternative duties to a worker who has been absent from work due to a disability.

Performance Management

The Township will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and the Documented Individual Accommodation Plan during all performance management processes.

Career Development and Advancement

The Township will take into account the accessibility needs of employees as well as the Documented Individual Accommodation Plan when providing career development and advancement.

I. Transportation Standard

The Township does not have a public transit system, nor does the Township have or license services such as taxis within the municipality, therefore Springwater is not regulated by this standard. If either of these are implemented, the Township will review policies for the Transportation Standard.

J. Accessibility Plans

The Township will establish, implement, maintain, and document a multi-year accessibility plan. The plan will outline the Township's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The plan will be reviewed by the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and approved by Council at least once every five years. Members of the public, including those who have a disability, are encouraged to provide input into the development of the plan.

An annual status report will be created which will identify the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan. The report will be presented to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and Council.

The complete accessibility plan and annual status report will be available to the public through the municipal website and at Township facilities. Upon request, it can be presented in accessible formats.

K. Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities

As per the Procurement By-law, as amended, the Township encourages the procurement of goods and services with due regard to the product being accessible to people with disabilities or be capable of being made accessible through the use of technology.

If the Township determines that it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facility, an explanation will be provided.

L. Training

Training will be given to everyone in the organization (including volunteers) who deal with members of the public, and develop policies, procedures, and practices for the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties. Third parties are required to also be trained in accessible customer service.

Training will be provided to each person as soon as practicable after they are assigned the applicable duties. Training will be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to the policies, practices, and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Records of employee training will be kept in the employees personnel file. The record will include the date the training was provided.

Due to the continually evolving changes in accessibility, the training program will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with the latest accessible methods.

M. Availability of Accessibility Policy

Copies of this policy will be available at all Township facilities open to the public including:

- a. The Township's Administration Centre.
- b. All Libraries (Midhurst, Minesing, Elmvale).
- c. Elmvale Arena.
- d. Fire Hall (Minesing).

A copy of this policy, appropriate documentation, and updates will also be posted on the Township website.

Specific formats, such as large font, for any of the documents included in this policy will be available upon request. The Township may require a certain amount of time to produce the specialized format requested, and final determination of the accommodation rests with the Township.

N. General

This Policy shall be administered by all Township departments.

This Policy shall be referred to as the Accessibility Policy.

This Policy shall come into force and effect on January 1, 2018.

This Policy is to be reviewed every five (5) years. Through the revision process, the Township will continue to evaluate their practices to better serve those with disabilities.

Nothing in this policy or any other regulation diminishes in any way the legal obligations of the Government of Ontario or of any person or organization, with respect to persons with disabilities that are imposed under this policy or otherwise imposed by law.

If a provision of this policy, an accessibility standard, or any other regulation conflicts with a provision of any other Act or regulation, the provision that provides the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings, structures or premises shall prevail.

This policy does not replace or change what must be done under other laws relating to accessibility such as the Ontario Building Code Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Where the standard sets different rules than other laws, the Township may be required to comply with both.

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