

TITLE: ACCESSIBILITY POLICY
POLICY NO: POL-C-01-16
REPEALS: POL-C-01-13
APPROVAL DATE: Approved by Council on July 18, 2016
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 18, 2016

**Township of West Lincoln
 Accessibility Policy
 In Compliance with AODA O. Reg. 429/07 and O. Reg. 191/11
 Up to and Including Compliance Deadlines of 2012-2016**

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1.0 Policy – Purpose and Scope

This policy updates the municipality’s existing Accessible Customer Service Policy. This policy implements the requirements of the Accessible Customer Service Standard and the Integrated Accessibility Standards (Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, Design of Public Spaces), Ontario Regulation 429/07 and Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

2.0. Statement of Commitment

The municipality is committed to providing excellent customer service to all its citizens. The municipality is committed to compliance with AODA and its accessibility standards. The municipality shall provide accessibility and accommodation for persons with disabilities through AODA’s customer service standard, integrated accessibility standard and all other standards as they are developed, and in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Accessibility Policy sets out the responsibilities of all persons in the employ of the municipality, its elected officials and those serving the municipality in an appointed capacity.

3.0 Definitions

“Accessible Communication Supports” means:

Captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

“Accessible Formats” means:

Large print, clear text, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

“Disability” means:

- (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 coordination, blindness, or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other service 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;

The definition includes disabilities that are non-visible, are temporary, may be intermittent or have varying degrees of severity. Information about any person's disability is personal and private and must be treated confidentially.

“Extranet website” means a controlled extension of the intranet, or internal network of an organization to outside users over the Internet;

“Internet website” means a collection of related web pages, images, videos or other digital assets that are addressed relative to a common Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) and is accessible to the public;

“Intranet website” means an organization's internal website that is used to privately and securely share any part of the organization's information or operational systems within the organization and includes extranet websites;

“New internet website” means either a website with a new domain name or a website with an existing domain name undergoing a significant refresh;

“New intranet website” means either an intranet website with a new domain name or an intranet website with an existing domain name undergoing a significant refresh.

“Guide Dog” means:

A guide dog as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*.

“Medical aid” means an assistive device including respirators and portable oxygen supplies.

“Mobility assistive device” means a cane, walker or similar aid.

“Personal Assistive Devices” means: Any aids including communication, cognition, and personal mobility, medical or technical aids that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of persons with disabilities. Assistive devices include, but are not limited to: wheelchairs, walkers, speech synthesizers, TTYs (Telephone Typewriters or Telephone Teletypes), computer technologies, canes and hearing devices.

“Performance management” means activities related to assessing and improving employee performance, productivity and effectiveness, with the goal of facilitating employee success.

“Redeployment” means the reassignment of employees to other departments or jobs within the organization as an alternative to layoff, when a particular job or department has been eliminated by the organization.

“Service Animal” means:

An animal that is of service to a person with a disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability. Verification of a service animal's status can be provided by way of government certification or by a letter from a registered health professional confirming the animal is required for reasons relating to the person's disability. Regulated health professionals who are eligible to provide this documentation include: an audiologist, speech-language pathologist, chiropractor, nurse, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, psychologist, registered psychotherapist, registered mental health therapist, physician or surgeon.

“Support Person” means:

Any one person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

“Volunteer” means:

A person who freely chooses to provide services to municipality without being remunerated or paid for such service in any way. A volunteer is not required to give, or entitled to receive any notice to terminate the volunteer relationship.

4.0. MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN AND ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

The municipality will draft and make public a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to address compliance requirements of O. Reg. 191/11. The Multi-Year Plan will replace the municipality's Annual Accessibility Plan and will be made public by January 1, 2013. The municipality will also draft and make public annual progress reports outlining steps taken to meet the goals and objectives of the Multi-Year Plan. The Multi-Year Plan Progress Report will be made public by January 1 of each year.

5.0 ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

5.1 How the Municipality Provides Services

- Municipal goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- The Municipality will listen to, be courteous, and treat all citizens with dignity and respect at all times;
- The Municipality will take the initiative to understand the needs of each individual in order to provide effective and efficient service every time;
- The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated within existing methods wherever possible unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanently, to aid a person with disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services;

- The Municipality will provide people with disabilities with equal service. If this is not possible or is cost prohibitive, the Municipality will provide choices and options regarding how the Municipality provides services and will work with customers to find acceptable and workable alternatives;
- The Municipality will take the initiative to identify and prevent problem situations up front and propose workable alternatives
- The Municipality shall take reasonable steps to communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. The Municipality shall also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public on behalf of the Municipality are properly trained in how to communicate with guests with various types of disabilities.

5.2 Assistive Devices

People with disabilities will be permitted to access, use and/or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices.

In the event a person utilizing an assistive device cannot access municipal goods or services, the Municipality will accommodate the customer by using any other temporary measures available and deemed appropriate, such as but not limited to providing access to other facilities, devices or a Support Person.

5.3 Service Animals

Certified service animals shall be permitted entry to all municipal facilities and meeting rooms which are open to the public, except where prohibited by law (such as where food preparation is being undertaken).

The Municipality will display decals at the main entrances of all municipally managed facilities reading "Support Persons and Certified Service Animals Permitted".

If you cannot easily identify that the animal is a service animal, you can ask the person to provide documentation from a regulated health professional. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability. Regulated health professionals who are eligible to provide this documentation include:

- A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

- A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

5.4 Support Persons

Support Persons shall be permitted entry to all municipal facilities and meeting rooms which are open to the public, except when there are fees applied against participants by a third party leasing or renting the facility.

The municipality may require that a person with a disability is accompanied by their support person at a specific location if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others. Before requiring a support person accompany a person with disability at any attraction, the municipality will consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs, consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence and determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises. If after all factors have been considered, and a support person is deemed required the admission fee for the support person must be waived.

The Municipality shall provide notice of any fee(s) applicable to support persons accompanying a person with disability when accessing goods and services. Notice of such fee(s) shall be in accordance with **the Township of West Lincoln and/or the Region of Niagara's By-law(s)**, if applicable, prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Act, 2001.

5.5 Notice of Temporary Disruptions

In the event that a temporary service disruption occurs which would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to the goods and service, the Municipality will post notice or otherwise make the disruption known to customers in the following methods/places:

- Web site; **and**
- Notice on all facility entrances where the disruption has occurred; **and**
- Reception and Information Counters; **and**
- Notification by Staff (where applicable); **and**
- Municipal Automated Answering Service – voice and TTY (where appropriate)

If an unexpected disruption occurs, persons with disabilities will be accommodated by the use of other means possible to deliver the goods and service, if available such as:

- the goods and service delivery agent may provide the goods or service directly to the person with a disability at an alternate place and time, as deemed appropriate; or

- If appropriate or required, deliver the goods and service to the person's place of residence; or
- Any other assistive measures available and deemed appropriate to deliver goods and services.

All notices of disruption shall include:

- The name of the event/service; and
- The normal service location being impacted; and
- Alternate service locations; and
- Alternate service methods; and
- Hours of service availability; and
- Contact information; and
- Any other information which impacts the delivery of goods and services.

6.0 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

6.1 Emergency Procedures, Plans and Public Safety Information

Emergency procedures, plans and public safety information that are available to the public as well as any relevant updates to these procedures, plans and information, will be made available to the public and in an accessible format or via accessible communication support upon request. Timeframes for provision of this information will be dependent upon the format requested but will be provided as soon as is practicable.

Municipal staff will be trained in emergency response policies and procedures as they relate to people with disabilities, including how to communicate emergency information, and how to offer evacuation assistance to people with disabilities, identifying accessible and safe evacuation routes.

6.2 Availability of Information in Alternate Format

Municipal information will be made available to the public and in an accessible format or via accessible communication support upon request. Timeframes for this information will be dependent upon the format requested but will be provided as soon as is practicable.

6.3 Website Accessibility

Beginning January 1, 2014, any new website design, new internet website or intranet website, or web-based applications that the municipality controls directly or through a contractual relationship that allows for modification of a product will also conform to W3C WCAG 2.0 Level A.

7.0 EMPLOYMENT POLICY

7.1 Workplace Emergency Response Information

Workplace Emergency procedures, plans and safety information will be made available in an accessible format or via accessible communication support upon request. Timeframes for this information will be dependent upon the format requested but will be provided as soon as is practicable. This information will be provided to the designated person who will assist the person with the disability as soon as is practicable. These procedures will be reviewed with the person on a regular basis and when there are changes to their circumstances.

7.2 Individualized Emergency Response Plans for Municipal Staff

Municipal staff with disabilities who may require assistance in an emergency situation are encouraged to identify their accessibility needs to their immediate supervisor so that individualized emergency accommodation plans can be created. Individualized plans will be created using the municipality's template. This information will be maintained confidentially. Where needed, we will also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency. With the employee's consent, we will provide workplace emergency information to a designated person who is providing assistance to that employee during an emergency. We will provide the information as soon as practicable after we become aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability. We will review the individualized workplace emergency response information:

- a) when the employee moves to a different location in the organization;
- b) when the employee's overall accommodations needs or plans are reviewed; and
- c) when the employer reviews its general emergency response policies.

7.3 Applicant Accommodation in Recruitment and Selection

The municipality will make accommodation available in its recruitment process to applicants with disabilities upon request. Applicants will also be accommodated when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process.

The municipality will notify its employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment and selection processes. If a selected applicant requests an accommodation, the municipality will consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation.

7.4 Notice of Accommodation Availability to Employees

The municipality will notify successful applicants of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when making offers of employment.

The municipality will also notify its employees of its policies for providing job accommodations. Employees will be provided updated information whenever there is a change to existing policies.

7.5 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees

The municipality will ensure all employees have information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace. When an employee with a disability requests accessible formats or communication supports, the municipality will consult with the employee and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation.

7.6 Individualized Accommodation Plans

The municipality shall create and use a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

7.7 Return-to-Work Accommodation Plans

The municipality shall create and use a written process for the development of return-to-work individual accommodation plans for employees returning to work who have been absent due to a disability and who now require accommodation in order to resume work.

7.8 Accommodation in Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement and Re-deployment

The municipality will ensure its performance management, career development and advancement opportunities and redeployment process is accessible to employees with disabilities. When an employee with a disability requests accessible formats or communication supports, the municipality will consult with the employee and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation.

8.0 TRAINING

All employees and agents of the municipality who are in direct contact with the public (e.g. face-to-face or telephone communication) shall be trained in the various aspects of accessible customer service delivery and integrated accessibility standards.

All training, regardless of format, shall have regard for:

- An overview of the purposes of the AODA;
- Overview of Accessible Customer Service and Integrated Accessibility Standard requirements;

- Instruction on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities, including provision of alternate formats;
- Instruction on interacting with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person;
- Overview of the municipality's obligation to provide information in alternate formats and alternate communication supports upon request including:
 - Review of different types of alternate formats
 - Review of alternate communication supports (sign language, gestures, boards with symbols, voice-synthesizers, etc.)
 - Review of municipality's alternate format service provider and process relating to securing information in alternate formats
 - Review of tracking system used for alternate formats upon request (as required)
- Instruction on the use of equipment or devices available, such as wheelchairs and TTY;
- Overview of Ontario Building Code accessibility updates
- Overview of Design of Public Spaces Standard requirements
- Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing municipal services.

In addition to the above customer service training, management and supervisory staff will be trained in the Employment Policy requirements and procedures (accessible recruitment and screening, employment policy and accommodation planning training) as well as our obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Training shall be mandatory for all employees upon their initial indoctrination and every 3 years thereafter. Ongoing training will also occur when whenever there are changes to the policies. The municipality will create and update training records to track accessibility training.

9.0 TRANSPORTATION

9.1 Transportation Policy

The Municipality's transportation system will be in compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards as applicable.

The Municipality shall carry out its functions and responsibilities in the following areas in compliance with AODA's Integrated Accessibility Standards, as follows:

9.2 Fare Equity for People with Disabilities

Transit shall not charge a higher fare to persons with disabilities using the transit system. Transit shall provide multiple options to persons with disabilities for fare payment on transit buses.

9.3 Fares for Support Persons

Transit fees for support persons (when accompanying a person with a disability) who specifically identify themselves as support persons shall be waived. No identification will be required in order to waive the fee.

9.4 Announcement Procedures

All transit drivers will make pre-board announcements of the route.

By 2017, all transit vehicles will provide an audible and visual announcement of next stop (s) while vehicle is on route or in operation.

9.4 Accessibility Features and Equipment

Information regarding existing accessibility features of transit vehicles, routes and services such as Boarding Procedures, Route Stop Accommodations, Priority Seating, Mobility Assistive Device Storage and Support Person Fare Policy will be made available in accessible format or accessible communication support upon request. This information shall be made available on the transit website

<https://www.westlincoln.ca/en/township-office/accessibility.aspx>

Joanne Scime, Clerk
Township of West Lincoln
318 Canborough Street
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
905-957-3346 ext. 5136
email: jscime@westlincoln.ca

9.5 Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures

Emergency Preparedness and Response Policies shall be made available to the public and provided in an accessible format upon request.

All transit drivers have been trained in emergency procedures in the event of a vehicle or accessibility equipment failure.

9.6 Boarding Policy

Drivers will ensure adequate time is provided to people with disabilities to safely board, be secured and de-board vehicles and will provide assistance for these activities upon request.

Drivers will ensure a person with a disability using a medical aid or service animal is allowed access to a transit vehicle.

9.7 Route Stop Accommodations

Passengers with disabilities using transit will be allowed to board and de-board the vehicles at the closest available location that is not an official stop if the official stop is not accessible and the safe location is along the same transit route. Location of the non-official boarding and de-boarding point will be determined by the driver but consideration will be given to the preferences of the person with a disability.

Drivers will promptly report to the **Manager/Supervisor for the Niagara Region Transit Services** where a route stop is temporarily inaccessible or where a temporary barrier exists. The Manager will ensure that passengers and appropriate staff are informed accordingly.

9.8 Priority Seating

Transit will establish and clearly mark with signage, priority seating areas for people with disabilities on each vehicle.

Seating will be located as close as practicable to the entrance doors. Priority seating shall have signage to indicate passengers without disabilities must vacate courtesy seating when required by a person with a disability.

9.9 Bus Stops and Shelters

As part of its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the municipality will work towards ensuring all transit stops and shelters (where they exist) will be accessible to people with disabilities.

10.0 FEEDBACK PROCESS

Feedback may be provided by a person with a disability in the manner deemed most convenient to them, such as in person, by telephone, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text by email or otherwise. The municipality will provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports, on request when requesting or receiving feedback from people with disabilities.

Feedback may be provided directly to the service provider or:

Joanne Scime, Clerk
Township of West Lincoln
318 Canborough Street
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
905-957-3346 ext. 5136
email: jscime@westlincoln.ca

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used to improve customer service.

The Responsible Officer for the Accessibility Policy will acknowledge concerns within five (5) business days and will respond in a timely manner with information regarding how the issue will be addressed.

The Municipality will make every effort to understand the problem, identify the appropriate contact and work towards a resolution.

In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided a response in a format identified as accessible to him or her.

11.0 AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

This policy and any other document deemed to be key in the delivery of goods and services will be made available upon request in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy will be made available on the municipality's website, and made available to any person to whom it provides goods or services using any other method or format as are reasonable in the circumstances.

12.0 POLICY REVIEW PROCESS

At minimum, this policy will be reviewed annually by appropriate municipal staff. However, the review process may be affected by AODA Regulations as they are announced. Therefore, this policy will also be reviewed upon announcement of any new Accessibility Standards of the AODA, 2005 to ensure integration and consistency with this policy. The policy may be modified to ensure full compliance with the AODA, 2005.

APPROVAL SOURCE: Assigned by Regulatory Compliance

ORIGINAL DATE: November 28, 2013

LAST REVIEW: June 24, 2016

LAST UPDATE: June 24, 2016

RESPONSIBLE DEPT.: Clerk's Department