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|  <p>Municipalité de RUSSELL Township</p> | Policy / Politique no: |
| | Title / Titre: Accessibility Policy for Township of Russell |
| | Department / Département : Finance Department |
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| Approved by / Approuvé par : Dan Faughnan, Chief Administrative Officer | |

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The Township of Russell is committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities, in regard to the use and benefit of Township services, programs, goods and facilities, in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. This commitment extends to residents, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible, and permanent or temporary disabilities.

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to provide the overarching framework to guide the review and development of other Township of Russell policies, standards, procedures, practices, by-laws and guidelines to comply with the standards developed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

DEFINITIONS

- **Accessible Formats** – May include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats.
- **Communication Supports** – May include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.
- **Disability** – Defined as per Section 2 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 and the Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19, as follows:
 - “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 impediments, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or in a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
 - A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - A mental disorder, or
 - An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

- **Public Building** – A building that belongs to the Township and is open to the public.
- **Service Animals** – As per Section 80.45(4) of the IASR: “An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:
 - the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person’s disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
 - the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:
 - 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).”
- **Support Person** – As per Section 80.4(3) of the IASR: “A support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.”
- **Unconvertible** – Information or communications are unconvertible if it is not technically feasible to convert the information or communications, or the technology to convert the information or communications is not readily available.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing this policy and recommending amendments to ensure ongoing compliance with regulated accessibility standards and legislated obligations.
- Reviewing site plans submitted to the Township to ensure accessibility standards in compliance with AODA legislation.
- Evaluating the community’s needs regarding accessibility and submitting requests for consideration in the annual budget exercise.

The Staff Liaison for the committee shall provide advice and guidance on the implementation of this policy.

Department heads, managers and supervisors shall ensure that they and their staff are familiar with and comply with this policy, where possible.

POLICY

METHODOLOGY

This policy was developed through consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, including citizens with disabilities. It demonstrates how the Township will meet the obligations

under the AODA legislation, and describes additional non-legislative initiatives designed to address specific community concerns and needs.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all Township employees, volunteers, and to any individual or organization (third party) that provides goods, services, programs or facilities to the public or other third parties on behalf of the Township in accordance with AODA legislation.

The Russell Public Library reports to a separate board and, as such, follows its own respective policies.

PRINCIPLES

The Township shall develop, implement and maintain policies governing the provision of goods, services, programs and facilities to people with disabilities in a manner that:

- Is free from discrimination;
- Is available in accessible formats and with communication supports;
- Seeks to provide integrated services;
- Provides an opportunity equitable to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services; and,
- Takes into consideration a person's disability.

LEGISLATED GOALS

General Standards

The Township of Russell is a designated public sector organization under the AODA and is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Township of Russell has established an Accessibility Advisory Committee, with a majority of the members being persons with disabilities. The Committee shall advise Council regarding the requirements and implementation of AODA accessibility standards, the review of accessibility reports, including access for persons with disabilities to a public building or premises, and other matters for which Council may seek advice. In addition, the Committee shall review the progress of the Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan once a year.

Accessibility Plan

The municipality produces a multi-year accessibility plan. The plan is posted on the municipality's website. The committee shall review the progress of the plan on an annual basis. The accessibility plan shall be reviewed and, if necessary, updated at least once every four years and presented to Council.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

The Township of Russell notifies the public regarding the availability of accessible formats and communication supports and shall, upon request and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities. Accessible formats and communication supports shall be provided in a timely manner, taking into account the person's particular accessibility needs and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

This requirement applies to Township information, communications, documents and emergency procedures, plans or public safety information made available to the public.

This requirement does not apply to products and product labels, unconvertible information and communications, and information that the Township does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship. If it is determined that information or communications are unconvertible, the department shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- An explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and,
- A summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

PROCUREMENT OF GOODS, SERVICES AND FACILITIES

When procuring goods, services or facilities, the Township shall incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features unless it is not practicable – for example, if there are no accessible features in existence.

If not practicable, or in instances where a purchase of an item without accessible features is made where they exist, the Township shall provide an explanation, upon request.

Training

We are committed to training all staff and volunteers in accessible customer service, other Ontario accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

In addition, we will train:

- a) all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- b) all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization.

Training of our employees and volunteers on accessibility relates to their specific roles.

Training includes:

- purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards;
- our policies related to the Customer Service Standards;
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- how to use the equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities; and
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our organization's goods, services or facilities.

We train every person as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to the policies.

We maintain records of the training provided including the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Feedback

Feedback on how goods, services and programs are provided to people with disabilities shall be invited, forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented and tracked. Feedback shall be accepted and responded to in accessible formats and with other communication supports as required.

We ensure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Assistive Devices, Service Animals and Support Persons

Township employees shall accommodate the use of personal assistive devices including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, scooters and Braille display boards. Where available, assistive devices including, but not limited to, assistive listening devices such as FM Loop systems, shall be kept in good working order and the public shall be informed of their availability.

Persons with disabilities, accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal and accessing goods, services or facilities that are provided to members of the public or other third parties at premises owned or operated by the Township, shall be permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises (for example, in food preparation areas as prohibited by Food Premises, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 562 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7).

If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the Township shall ensure that other measures are available to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the provider's goods, services or facilities.

An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- The animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- The person provides documentation from a regulated health professional, described in Section 80.45 (4) of the IASR, confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the Township permits both persons to enter the premises together and the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.

If the Township charges an admission fee to a support person, the Township shall ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, that is payable in respect of the support person accompanying a person with a disability.

As per Section 80.47(5) of the IASR, the Township may require that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person when on Township premises or participating in Township-run programs, but only if, after consulting with the person with a disability, Township staff determine that:

- The support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability and the health and safety of others on the premises; and,
- There is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and the health and safety of others on the premises.

In such instances, the Township shall waive any amount payable in respect of the support person's admission to the premises or in connection with the support person's presence on the premises.

Notice of Service Disruption

In the event that there is a temporary service disruption in the availability of facilities, services or goods used by persons with disabilities (e.g., temporary loss of elevator service), the Township shall give notice to the public of the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available. Such notices are provided by a variety of methods, depending on the circumstances. They may include postings in conspicuous places at the affected premises, in other Township facilities, and on the Township's website.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORTS STANDARDS

Communication

When communicating with a person with a disability, Township employees shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

We ensure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

The Township's website is controlled directly by the Township of Russell or through a contractual relationship. The Township's website shall conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level A and AA in accordance with the schedule set out in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Recruitment

The Township of Russell shall post information about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process. Job applicants who are individually selected for an interview and/or testing shall be notified that accommodations for material to be used in the process are available, upon request. The Township shall consult with any applicant who requests accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's disability. Successful applicants shall be notified of the Township's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities as part of their offer of employment.

Employee Supports

The Township must inform its employees of its support for employees with disabilities, including job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability. The Township will provide this information to new employees as soon as possible after they take up their duties.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees

Upon an employee's request, the Township shall consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for:

- Information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and
- Information that is generally available to employees in the workplace.

The Township will consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

Workplace Emergency Response Information

If an employee's disability is such that workplace emergency response information is necessary and the Township is aware of the need for accommodation, this information shall be provided to employees as soon as practicable. In addition, this information shall be provided, with the employee's consent, to the person designated to provide assistance. The information shall undergo review when:

- The employee moves to a different location;
- The employee's overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed; and,
- The Township reviews its general emergency response plan.

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.

Performance Management and Career Development

The Township shall take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans when providing career development and conducting performance management.

TRANSPORTATION STANDARDS

Taxicabs

Owners and operators of taxicabs licensed by the Township of Russell are prohibited by by-law 33-2008 S.4, (1) q, from charging additional fares or fees to persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities and for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices. The Township requires that taxicabs licensed by the Township make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format.

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES STANDARDS

The Township shall comply with the *AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards (DOPS)* (including consultation requirements when undertaking new construction and redevelopment of public spaces) in the following areas:

- Recreational trails;
- Outdoor public use eating areas;
- Outdoor play spaces;

- Exterior paths of travel;
- Accessible parking;
- Obtaining services; and,
- Maintenance of accessible elements.

MONITORING / CONTRAVENTIONS

Failure to comply with the AODA regulations can result in administrative penalties. Supervisors and managers shall monitor current practices to ensure compliance.

