

 Region of Waterloo Accessibility Policy		Section #	Policy #
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		Approval Date: August 29, 2012	Revision Date: December 6, 2016
Title:	Standards for Accessibility		
Responsibility:	Human Resources and Citizen Service, Citizen Service	Approval Level:	Council
Applies to:	All Regional Staff, Councillors, and Volunteers		

Policy Statement:

The Regional Municipality of Waterloo (the “Region”) is committed to inclusion, promoting diversity in Regional programs and services, and understanding and meeting the needs of all those we serve. The Region will meet the needs of people with disabilities in a manner that:

- Is free from discrimination;
- Uses reasonable efforts to ensure there are equal opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain, use, or benefit from the Region’s goods, services, programs, and facilities;
- Protects the dignity and independence of all people, and;
- Strives to provide responsive and integrated services.

The Region will meet this commitment by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting our accessibility requirements under Ontario’s accessibility laws, including the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Definitions:

1. “Alternate formats” may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

2. “Assistive device” means a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help with daily living, including but not limited to a wheelchair or walker, white canes, hearing aids, oxygen tanks, or communication boards.
3. “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.
4. “Dignity” means service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
5. “Disability” is as defined in section 10 of the Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990 c. H.19.
6. “Equal Opportunity” means service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they can access goods and services equal to that given of others.
7. “Independence” means when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
8. “Integration” means service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.
9. An animal is a “service animal” for a person with a disability if:
 - a. 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
 - b. 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:
 - i. A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
 - ii. A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
 - iii. A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
 - iv. A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
 - v. A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
 - vi. A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

- vii. A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
 - viii. A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
 - ix. A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.
10. “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, services or facilities.
11. “Temporary disruption” means a short term planned or unplanned disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to get goods and services.

Operating Principles:

The Region develops policies, practices, and procedures which contribute to ensuring that goods, services, programs, and facilities are accessible for persons with disabilities. The following principles shall be met when developing such policies, practices, and procedures.

1) Accessibility Planning

The Region will establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan in accordance with the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11). The multi-year accessibility plan will outline the ways the Region will identify, prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements of the standards developed under the AODA.

The multi-year accessibility plan will be:

- Reviewed and updated at least once every five years; and
- Established, reviewed, and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities and the municipal accessibility advisory committee.
- An annual status update report on the progress of measures taken to implement the multi-year accessibility plan will be prepared. The multi-year accessibility plan and accompanying status update reports will be posted to the Region’s website and provided in alternate formats upon request.

2) Procurement

Whenever possible, Regional staff will incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities.

When not practicable to incorporate accessibility design criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, staff shall provide, upon request an explanation.

3) Communication Supports

The Region will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disability. The Region will provide communication supports to members of the public upon request, in a timely manner, and at no cost to the requestor.

Regional staff members will consult with the requestor to determine the suitability of the communication support.

If Regional staff members are unable to obtain the required communication support, they will consult with the requestor to determine a practicable and appropriate method for communication.

4) Alternate Formats

The Region will provide alternate formats and communication supports of information that are produced or controlled by the Region to members of the public and other third parties upon request.

This will be done in a timely manner, at a cost that is no more than the cost charged for the original format.

Regional staff members will consult with the requestor to determine the suitability of the accessible format.

When it is not practicable to provide an alternate format the Region will provide an explanation and a summary of the document in an accessible format.

5) Feedback on Regional Services

The Region has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the Region provides goods, services, and facilities to persons with disabilities. The Region will ensure that the feedback process is accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of alternate formats and communication supports, upon request.

Members of the public may provide feedback through the Region's website, through the General Enquiries email address, by telephone, and in person.

All feedback received from the public regarding the accessibility of services will be provided to all relevant Regional staff members who will take appropriate action.

6) Obtaining Public Feedback

The Region will provide, upon request, accessible formats and communication supports when seeking public input, feedback, and advice, when practicable.

Should Regional staff be unable to provide a requested accessible format or communication support, they will work with the citizen to determine alternate means for participation in citizen feedback.

7) Fares, Fees, and Charges

Persons with disabilities will not be charged more to access Regional programs or services than that charged for the same program or service to persons without disabilities, in accordance with the Regional Fees and Charges By-Law (12-001).

Should an accessible format or communication support cost more for the Region to provide to a person with a disability than a typical format or communication method to a person without a disability, the person with the disability will be charged the same price as that charged to the person without the disability and the originating Department will subsidize any additional cost.

Owners and operators of taxicabs licensed by the Region are prohibited from charging additional fares or fees to persons with disabilities than those for persons without disabilities, or for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.

8) Temporary Disruptions

If there is a temporary disruption in any Regional services or facilities that people with disabilities usually use, the Region will give notice of the disruption, consistent with the Region of Waterloo's Notice Policy. The notice will include the reason for the disruption, how long it will last, and will list any alternatives, if available.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the premises, through use of social media, or by posting the notice on the Region's website.

9) Support Persons

The Region will allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person in all Region-owned and operated public facilities.

The Region reserves the right to require the person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises. The decision to require a support person to accompany a person with a disability will be made in consultation with the person with the disability, and in consideration of available evidence. If it is determined that support person is required, the Region shall waive any fees or fares for the support person, if one exists.

The Region will provide notification of any applicable admission fees or fares that apply to support persons by posting such admission fee or fare where all other fees or fares are posted.

10)Service Animals

The Region welcomes service animals into all Region-owned or operated facilities where the public is allowed. Service animals will be allowed to accompany a person with a disability to allow them to access facilities and services.

If a service animal is otherwise excluded from the premises by law, Regional staff members will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services provided by the Region.

11)Use of Assistive Devices

The Region will allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use, or benefit from Regional goods, services, or facilities.

If a person with a disability is unable to access the Region's services through the use of their own personal assistive device, Regional staff members will work with the customer to determine any alternate means for accessing services.

12)Emergency Procedures, Plans, and Public Safety Information

The Region will provide emergency procedures, plans, and public safety information in an accessible format or with communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request.

13)Libraries

The Region will provide access to or arrange for the provision of access to accessible library materials where they exist. Information about accessible materials can be found on the Region of Waterloo Library website.

14) Websites and Web Content

In accordance with the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11), the Region will ensure that websites owned by the Region, and web content on those sites that was published after January 1, 2012 are created in a manner in keeping with the expectations of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG). All existing Region websites and applicable content on those sites will follow the WCAG 2.0 at Level A. Those existing websites and applicable content on those sites will follow the WCAG 2.0 at Level AA by January 1, 2021. All new Region websites and applicable content on those sites will be created in accordance to the WCAG 2.0 at Level AA. If an individual is having difficulty accessing any Region owned websites, or content found on those sites, they can contact the Region through the General Enquiries email address, by telephone, and in person

To ensure web content accessibility, Region staff responsible for posting web content will receive training to ensure web content and PDF documents are created in accordance with the WCAG 2.0.

Departments responsible for purchasing a document or video that will be available on any Region website shall ensure that the document or video is created in a manner that ensures compliance with the WCAG 2.0.

The Region will put forward efforts to ensure that documents provided to the Region on behalf of a third party, which will be posted on the Region's website, and not in direct control of the Region through a contractual relationship, will be remediated in accordance with the WCAG 2.0, unless it is not practicable to do so.

In the event that it is not practicable to remediate a third party document which the Region is not in direct control through a contractual relationship, a member of the public may contact the Region to arrange for the information to be provided in an alternate format or with communication supports, upon request. The Region will consult with the requesting individual to determine suitability of format.

15) Training

The Region will provide training to:

- All people who are an employee of, or a volunteer with the Region
- All people who participate in the development of Regional policies; and,
- All other people who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the Region.

The training will include:

- An overview of the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities
- A review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- A review of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11)
- Specific review of the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation requirements, based on the duties associated with the employee
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities,
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or the assistance of a support person.
- How to use equipment or devices available on the Region premises or otherwise provided by the Region that may help with the provision of goods, services, or facilities to a person with a disability
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Region's goods, services, or facilities.

The training will be appropriate to the duties of the employee, volunteer, and other people. Employees will be trained as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to the aforementioned individuals with respect to any policy changes on an ongoing basis. The Region will log and retain records containing the details of the training provided, the number of people trained, location, and date the training was completed.

16) Accessible Workplace

The Region meets the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg. 191/11) under the AODA and, in particular, Part III Employment Standards of such Regulation by:

- Ensuring the recruitment process is inclusive of people with disabilities;
- Informing employees of supports available for employees with disabilities;
- Accommodating employees with disabilities under the AODA in the areas of:
 - Workplace emergency response information;
 - Information and communications needed to perform the employee's job or that is generally available to employees in the workplace; and
 - Other accommodations as required under the Accommodation of Special Needs Policy (III-17).
- Taking into account employee accommodations in:
 - Performance management;
 - Career development and advancement; and
 - Redeployment; and
 - Developing and implementing a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

17) Accessible Transportation

a. Conventional and Specialized Transit Services

The Region is committed to providing accessible transit services through both conventional and specialized transit, in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards (O.Reg. 191/11) under the AODA and, in particular, Part IV, Transportation Standards, of such Regulation. This will be accomplished through the development and implementation of policies, practices, procedures, resources, equipment, and training in the provisions outlined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation under the AODA.

b. Regionally Licensed Transportation

Owners and operators of taxicabs licensed by the Region will operate in accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11) under the AODA. Without limitation, the Region requires that taxicabs licensed by the Region make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format.

18) Design of Public Spaces

The Region will comply with the requirements found in in Part IV.1 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg. 191/11) where applicable, in relation to public spaces.

Review Period:

This policy shall be reviewed once per Council term and will be revised in light of any legislative or organizational changes.

Responsibilities:

Regional Council and staff are responsible for adhering to the parameters of this policy and for ensuring the needs of people with disabilities are addressed in goods, services, programs, and facilities.

Monitoring / Contraventions:

The Manager, Client Experience and Service Improvement, shall be responsible for receiving all concerns or questions related to this policy. Upon receipt of a concern or

question the Manager, Client Experience and Service Improvement shall notify the staff member responsible and, if appropriate, the Department Head and Director responsible for the area, or in the case of Regional Council, the Regional Chair.