



ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES

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Statement of Commitment

The Corporation of the Township of Ramara is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and Ontario's accessibility laws.

The Corporation of the Township of Ramara is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

The Corporation of the Township of Ramara understands that obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

Our policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Purpose

To meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), Provincial legislation designed to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025 by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards.

Application

This policy shall apply to the Members of Council, all Ramara employees, as well as volunteers, agents and/or contractors who act on behalf of or represent Ramara in any manner. This also applies to members and volunteers of all Ramara Committees and Boards and its employees and volunteers.

Definitions

“Accessible Formats” includes, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities;

“Accommodation” means the special arrangement made or assistance provided so that persons with disabilities can participate in the experiences available to persons without disabilities. Accommodation will vary depending on the person’s needs;

“Assistive Devices: shall include but not limited to wheelchairs, hearing aids, adaptive computer technologies, ventilators, walkers, crutches and personal sound amplification devices.

“Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. This includes physical, architectural, information or communication, attitudinal or technological barrier; as well as a policy or a practice.

“Communication Supports” includes, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications;

“Disability” means (Human Rights Code):

1. 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 animal, or on a wheelchair, or other remedial appliance or device;
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
4. a mental disorder; or
5. any injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

“Guide Dog” means a guide dog as defined under Section 1 of the Blind Persons’ Rights Act.

“Information” includes data, facts and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital or images, and that conveys meaning;

“Ramara” means the Corporation of the Township of Ramara;

“Self-service Kiosk” means an interactive electronic terminal, including point of sale device, intended for public use that allows users to access one or more services or products or both.

“Service Animal” means any animal, including a guide dog, where it is readily apparent that the person for reasons relating to his or her disability uses the animal or if the person provides a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that, the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability. O.Reg.429/07, s.4(9).

“Support Person” means a person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to good or services O.Reg.429/07,s.4(8).

Implementation

Accessible Customer Service

Ramara shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all residents receive the same value and quality;
- Allowing residents/visitors with disabilities to do things in their own way, at their own pace when accessing services, as long as it does not present a health and safety risk;
- using alternative methods when possible to ensure that residents/visitors with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- taking into account individual accommodation needs when providing services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the resident/visitors disability.

Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices when accessing goods or services of Ramara. Ramara may also provide assistive devices if available in order for those persons with disabilities may access the goods or services.

In times, or cases, where the assistive device presents a health and safety concern or an accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of services, up to the point of undue hardship.

Guide Dogs/Service Animals

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and third parties. Any policies regarding no pets, do not apply to guide dogs or service animals.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, staff may respectfully ask for documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability without asking the nature of the person's disability or the purpose of the animal.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

If service animals are prohibited by another law i.e. Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001 or the Dog Owners' Liability Act, 2005, we will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities:

- explain why the animal is excluded
- discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities

A person who is accompanied with a guide dog or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times. If a health and safety concern presents itself, Ramara will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals. Each customer's accommodations needs will be considered on a case-by-case, up to the point of undue hardship, in accordance with the Township's obligations under the Human Rights Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Under exceptional circumstances where a service animal becomes out of control, causing clear disruption or a threat to the health and safety of others, and the animal's behavior is not corrected by the owner, a person with a disability can be asked to remove their service animal from the premises.

If the person and service animal have been in attendance on the premises for a long time, staff may ask if the service animal is in need of water, designate an area in which the service animal can relieve itself or ask whether the staff can be of assistance pertaining to the service animal

Support Persons

When a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, both are permitted to enter together and are not prevented from having access to each other while on the premises. It may be a requirement of Ramara that a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person in order to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability while on the premises. Before making a decision, you must:

- Consult with the person with the disability to understand their needs;
- Consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence;
- Determine if there is no other way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises.

In such a situation, the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists, must be waived.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent from the customer must be obtained prior to any confidential information is disclosed.

Disruption of Services

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in a facility or service usually used by persons with disabilities, Ramara shall give notice of the disruption to the public.

The notice shall include the following information:

- Name of the goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable
- the reason for the disruption,
- anticipated duration; and
- a description of alternative services or options, if available.

When disruptions occur, notice will be made publicly available by:

- Posting notices in conspicuous places, including the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption;
- Contacting customers with appointments or planned programming;
- Notifying the customer when they make an appointment;
- Posting notice on the Township's website and various social media outlets; or
- Any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances

Feedback Process

The Township shall provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on any service provided. Information about the feedback process is readily available to all customers and notice of the property is available on the Township's website. Feedback forms are available on the Township's website and upon request. Alternate methods of providing feedback include:

- Verbally, in person or by telephone;
- Written, delivered in person or via Canada Post, through the webstie or via email or fax;
- Annual Accessibility Plan Public Meeting.

All feedback regarding accessibility issues will be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator and customers can expect an acknowledgement of receipt within 2

business days. It is suggested that all feedback regarding experiences with our services include suggestions for improvement.

Changes to our policies and procedures will be implemented as soon as practicable. If changes require significant financial or capital investment, a plan will be developed to address the situation and submitted to Council for approval.

Training

Training on serving customers with disabilities is provided to all employees and volunteers with the Township of Ramara; anyone who participates in developing the policies of the Township of Ramara; and anyone who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Township.

Training will be provided as soon as practicable during the onboarding process as well as when there are any changes to the accessible customer service policies.

Accessible Customer Service Training will cover the following:

- a review of the purpose of the A.O.D.A.;
- overview of the requirements of the Customer Service Standards and the Human Rights Codw;
- instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- instructions on how to interact and communicate with people who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog or service animal; and
 - require the use of a support person.
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises;
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing our goods, services or facilities;
- Policies, procedures and practices of the Township
- How to use any equipment or devices provided by the Township that can help to provide goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities.

General Requirements

Multi-Year Plans

Ramara has established, implemented, maintained and documented its multi-year Accessibility Plan, which outlines Ramara's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation; post the Accessibility Plan on Ramara's website; provide the Plan in an accessible format upon request; and review and update the Accessibility Plan at least every five (5) years.

Ramara shall establish, review and update this Plan in consultation with persons with disabilities, and in consultation with Senior Staff.

Ramara shall prepare an annual status report (updated Multi-year Accessibility Plan) to Council on the progress of measures taken to implement the accessibility strategy; post the status report on the website; and provide the report in an accessible format upon request.

Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities

Ramara has incorporated into the Procurement Bylaw accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not feasible to do so. If Ramara determines that it is not feasible to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, it shall provide an explanation to the public, upon request, in an accessible format or with the appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable.

Self-Service Kiosks

Ramara shall consider and incorporate accessibility features when designing, procuring or acquiring interactive electronic self-serve kiosks.

Training

Ramara shall continue to ensure that training is provided on the requirements of the AODA and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities to all employees, volunteers and third parties. The training shall be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons with respect to Accessible Customer Service, General Requirements, Information and Communications, Employment, Design of Public Spaces and the Human Rights Code.

Every person shall be trained as soon as practicable during onboarding and such training shall be provided in respect of any changes to the policies on an ongoing basis.

Ramara shall keep a record of the training provided, including the dates on which the training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided.

Training includes:

- purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005;
- requirements of the Accessibility Standards;
- requirements of the Human Rights Code;
- our policies related to the Customer Service Standards and the Integrated Accessibility 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. These include:
 - Council Chambers equipped with large screens for viewing;
 - Council Chambers equipped with hearing devices;
 - Front desk computer available for public use.
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty 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.

Information and Communication

Emergency Information

Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information that is made available to the public will be provided in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request, as soon as practicable.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

Internet websites, web content and social media platforms controlled by the Township of Ramara shall conform to the Web content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA.

Accessible formats and communication supports

Ramara shall provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, upon request, and in a timely manner that takes into account the person's needs; and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged for the same information. Ramara will consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. Ramara shall notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

The Plan will be available to the public on Ramara's website. The Plan is also available in alternate formats upon request.

Employment

Township of Ramara is dedicated to providing accessible services and work environment for all employees, prospective employees, and clients. This policy outlines the Township's compliance with Parts I and III of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) set forth under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

This policy ensures Township of Ramara provides services and employment practices that follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

Workplace Emergency Response Information

Ramara will provide individualized emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary and the employer is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

Recruitment, Assessment and Selection

Ramara will advise job applicants that people with disabilities will be accommodated throughout the recruitment, assessment and selection process. If a job applicant requests accommodations, Ramara will consult with them and make adjustments that best suit their needs. Successful applicants will be notified of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

If a selected applicant requests an accommodation, Ramara shall consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for the provision of a suitable accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's accessibility needs due to disability.

When making offers of employment Ramara shall notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

Information for Employees

Ramara shall inform its employees of its policies used to support its employees with disabilities, including but not limited to policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

Information for new employees shall be provided as soon as practicable after they begin their employment.

Updated information shall be provided to employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that takes into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

Accessible formats and communication supports

In addition to its obligations under section 12, where an employee with a disability so requests it, Ramara shall consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for,

- (a) information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and
- (b) information that is generally available to employees in the workplace.

Ramara shall consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

Processes to Accommodate Employees

Ramara will work with employees to develop plans and processes that meet their needs.

Personal Workplace Emergency Response Information

Ramara shall 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 employer is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

If an employee who receives individualized workplace emergency response information requires assistance and with the employee's consent, the employer shall provide the workplace emergency response information to the person designated by the employer to provide assistance to the employee.

Ramara shall provide the information required under this section as soon as practicable after the employer becomes aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

Ramara shall 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.

Individualized Accommodation Plans

The Township will develop written process for the development of documented Individual Accommodation Plans for employees with disabilities upon request. Individual accommodation plans are not required if the employee does not make the Township aware of their disability. The process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans shall include the following elements:

1. The manner in which an employee requesting accommodation can participate in the development of the individual accommodation plan.
2. The means by which the employee is assessed on an individual basis.
3. The manner in which the employer can request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert, at the employer's expense, to assist the employer in determining if accommodation can be achieved and, if so, how accommodation can be achieved.
4. The manner in which the employee can request the participation of a representative from their bargaining agent, where the employee is represented by a bargaining agent, or other representative from the workplace, where the employee is not represented by a bargaining agent, in the development of the accommodation plan.
5. The steps taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information.
6. The frequency with which the individual accommodation plan will be reviewed and updated and the manner in which it will be done.
7. If an individual accommodation plan is denied, the manner in which the reasons for the denial will be provided to the employee.
8. The means of providing the individual accommodation plan in a format that takes into account the employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

Individual accommodation plans shall:

1. If requested and in consultation with the employee, include any information regarding accessible formats and communications supports for:
 - a. Information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and
 - b. Information that is generally available to employees in the workplace;
2. If required, include 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.
3. Identify any other accommodation that is to be provided.

Return to Work Process

The Township shall ensure that the written Return to Work Process adequately supports employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and who require accommodations to return to work. The process will address steps to take to facilitate the return to work including the development of an individual accommodation plan.

The return to work process shall:

- a) outline the steps the employer will take to facilitate the return to work of employees who were absent because their disability required them to be away from work; and
- b) use documented individual accommodation plans, as described in section 28, as part of the process. O.Reg. 191/11, s. 29 (2).

The return to work process referenced in this section does not replace or override any other return to work process created by or under any other statute.

Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement, and Redeployment

The Township shall take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and Individual Accommodation Plans in the Performance Management process, when providing career development and advancement opportunities, and when considering redeployment for an employee with a disability.

Transportation

Accessible Taxicabs

If Ramara licenses taxicabs, it will ensure that taxicabs are prohibited from charging a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities for the same trip; and from charging an additional fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.

Design of Public Spaces

Ramara shall comply with the Design of Public Spaces Standards when undertaking new construction or significantly planned renovations of outdoor public spaces.

Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes

Ramara will ensure that any new or reconstructed recreational trails and beach access routes will meet the requirements of the design of public spaces standard including minimum width and height measurements and surface material and shall consult with the public, persons with disabilities and the appropriate staff with regards to:

1. The slope of the trail
2. The need for and location of ramps
3. The need for, location and design of: rest areas, passing areas, viewing areas, amenities and any other pertinent features of the trail

Trailhead signage must contain information about the physical characteristics of the trail (i.e. length, average and minimum width and location of amenities). Other media used to provide trail information such as website or brochure must contain the same information as the trailhead signage.

Note: Wilderness trails, backcountry trails, portage routes and trails meant exclusively for cross-country skiing, mountain biking or driving motorized recreational vehicles (i.e. snowmobiles and ATVs) are excluded from the Standard.

Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas

Ramara will ensure that any new or reconstructed outdoor public use eating areas meet the requirements of the Standard including:

1. Minimum 20% of new tables added, and no fewer than one, must be accessible to people using mobility devices;

2. Ground surface leading to accessible tables must be level, firm and stable for people using mobility devices;
3. Sufficient clear space surrounding accessible tables for people using mobility devices.

Outdoor Play Spaces

Ramara will ensure that any new or reconstructed outdoor play spaces containing play equipment such as swings and/or play features such as logs, rocks, sand or water meet the following requirements:

1. Consult with the public, people with disabilities and appropriate staff to identify the needs of users in the local community;
2. Incorporate sensory components to promote active play experiences (sand, water or sound);
3. Ensure there is sufficient space for children and caregivers to move through, in and around the play space;
4. Ensure ground surface is firm, stable and shock absorbing to prevent injuries.

Exterior Paths of Travel

Exterior paths of travel are sidewalks and walkways but do not include paths of travel regulated by the Ontario Building Code (from parking lot to building entrance). Ramara will ensure that newly constructed or reconstructed exterior paths of travel will meet the technical requirements of the Standard:

1. Minimum width and height measurements for sidewalks and walkways;
2. Minimum width, maximum steepness of slopes, size of landings and handrail requirements;
3. Stairs that connect to an exterior path of travel will be a certain size, have high tonal contrast and tactile walking surface at the top of each flight
4. Pedestrian curb ramps will align with direction of travel, minimum width and maximum steepness, tactile walking surface indicators;
5. Accessible pedestrian signals will include features for people with vision loss and those who are deaf-blind;
6. Consult with the public, people with disabilities and the appropriate staff regarding the placement and design of rest areas.

Accessible Parking

Off and on-street parking requirements when building new or making significant modifications:

1. Off-street accessible parking will include:
 - a) The required number of standard width accessible spaces and wider spaces identified as “van accessible”;
 - b) Accessible parking spaces will include access aisles between the parking spaces;
 - c) Accessible parking space signage must meet the requirements of Regulation 581 of the Highway Traffic Act.

2. On-street accessible parking will include:
 - a) Consultation with public, people with disabilities and appropriate committee/staff regarding the need, location and design of accessible on-street parking.

Obtaining Services

Ramara will ensure that all new or replaced service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas, whether inside or outside, include a section that is accessible to people with disabilities:

1. An accessible service counter must be useable by someone sitting in a mobility aid and have enough clear space to approach the counter;
2. Queuing areas need to be wide enough to accommodate people using mobility devices and if there is more than one queuing line, there must be least one clearly identified as an accessible queuing area;
3. New or significantly altered waiting areas must have at least 3% of the new seating area to be accessible and no less than one accessible seating space.

Maintenance Planning of Public Spaces

Ramara will incorporate within its accessibility plan, procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for dealing with disruptions when accessible elements required under the design of public spaces standards are not in proper working order.

Exclusions

This policy shall not apply during an event where an “emergency”, as defined under Ramara’s Emergency Plan, is declared.

References and Related Policies

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (A.O.D.A.)
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R.)
- Ontario Human Rights Code

Review Cycle

This Policy will be reviewed as required, but in any case no later than five (5) years from the date of the most recent review. The Ramara Clerk shall be responsible for initiating the review and updating this Policy as well as that of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, reporting to the Province, and making improvements as needed (housekeeping, to conform with legislative amendments or continuous improvement procedures).