

Accessibility Policy

FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF RAMARA
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Table of Contents	
Policy Statement	3
Purpose.....	3
Application.....	3
Definitions	3
Implementation.....	5
Accessible Customer Service	5
Guide Dogs/Service Animals.....	5
Support Persons	6
Disruption of Services	6
Feedback Process	7
Assistive Devices	7
General Requirements.....	8
Multi-Year Accessibility Plans	8
Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities	8
Self-Service Kiosks	8
Training	8
Information and Communication.....	10
Emergency Information	10
Accessible Websites and Web Content	10
Accessible formats and communication supports	10
Employment.....	10
Workplace Emergency Response Information	11
Recruitment, Assessment and Selection.....	12
Information for Employees	12
Processes to Accommodate Employees.....	12
Personal Workplace Emergency Response Information	12
Individualized Accommodation Plans.....	12
Return to Work Process	12
Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement, and Redeployment	12

Transportation.....	13
Accessible Taxicabs.....	13
Design of Public Spaces.....	13
Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes	13
Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas.....	13
Outdoor Play Spaces	14
Exterior Paths of Travel.....	14
Accessible Parking.....	14
Obtaining Services.....	15
Maintenance Planning of Public Spaces	15
Exclusions.....	15
Policy Review.....	15

Accessibility Policy for The Corporation of the Township of Ramara

Policy Statement

The Township of Ramara (Ramara) is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. Ramara believes in integration and equal opportunity. Ramara is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

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 practise.

“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):

- 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 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) 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 following principles:

- The goods or services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities
- The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities, and others, will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services
- Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
- When communicating with a person with a disability Township of Ramara employees shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

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.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask for documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

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.

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, 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

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.

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 information about the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and provide alternatives, if available.

Services/Facilities may include:

- Administration Centre
- Ramara Centre
- Township of Ramara Community Centres (Atherley, Brechin, Longford, Udney)

Notice will be made publicly available by:

- Posting notice on the entrances to the facility;
- Posting notice on the Township's website and various social media outlets.

Feedback Process

The Township welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Ramara shall ensure that the processes are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communications supports, upon request. Ramara shall notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Feedback on accessibility of the provision of goods and services may be provided in the following ways:

- by telephone or in person through the Customer Care Call Centre;
- correspondence via Canada Post, fax or email;
- comments at the Annual Accessibility Public Meeting; or
- online feedback form on the Township's website.

All feedback will be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator and customers can expect to hear back within 2 business days.

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.

Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities are permitted to use personal assistive devices in order to access 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.

General Requirements

Multi-Year Accessibility 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 and the Design of Public Spaces.

Every person shall be trained as soon as practicable 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.

We are committed to training all staff and volunteers in accessible customer service, other Ontario's 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. 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

2014-Ramara shall ensure that all new internet websites and web content on those sites conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level A.

2021-Ramara shall ensure that all internet websites and web content on those sites conform to the 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

We notify employees, job applicants and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring. We notify job applicants when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodations are available upon request. We consult with the applicants and provide or arrange for suitable accommodation.

We notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when making offers of employment.

We notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities as soon as practicable after they begin their employment. We provide updated information to employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job

accommodation that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.

We will consult with employees when arranging for the provision of suitable accommodation in a manner that takes into account the accessibility needs due to disability. We will consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication supports specifically 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

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.

We have a written process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

We have a written process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

Our performance management, career development and redeployment processes take into account the accessibility needs of all employees.

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.

Information for Employees

Ramara will provide information to employees with disabilities in a manner that meets with their disability.

Processes to Accommodate Employees

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

Personal Workplace Emergency Response Information

In order to prepare for the specific needs of employees with disabilities in emergency situations such as fire, power outages, severe weather, natural disasters and security incidents, the Township shall work with employees with disabilities to develop individualized workplace emergency response information while discreetly respecting the employee's privacy.

Individualized Accommodation Plans

The Township will develop written 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.

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.

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:

- i. The slope of the trail
- ii. The need for and location of ramps
- iii. 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:

- i. Minimum 20% of new tables added, and no fewer than one, must be accessible to people using mobility devices;
- ii. Ground surface leading to accessible tables must be level, firm and stable for people using mobility devices;
- iii. 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:

- i. Consult with the public, people with disabilities and appropriate staff to identify the needs of users in the local community;
- ii. Incorporate sensory components to promote active play experiences (sand, water or sound);
- iii. Ensure there is sufficient space for children and caregivers to move through, in and around the play space;
- iv. 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:

- i. Minimum width and height measurements for sidewalks and walkways;
- ii. Minimum width, maximum steepness of slopes, size of landings and handrail requirements;
- iii. 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
- iv. Pedestrian curb ramps will align with direction of travel, minimum width and maximum steepness, tactile walking surface indicators;
- v. Accessible pedestrian signals will include features for people with vision loss and those who are deaf-blind;
- vi. 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:

- i. 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.
- ii. 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:

- i. An accessible service counter must be useable by someone sitting in a mobility aid and have enough clear space to approach the counter;
- ii. 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;
- iii. 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.

Policy Review

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).