



Corporation of the Town of Hearst

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Corporation of the Town of Hearst (the Town) is in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. The Town is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons serviced by the Municipality.

Application

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town, whether the persons does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer, student on placement, or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the Town's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

Responsibilities

Employees shall adhere to the provisions of this policy.

Heads of Departments shall adhere to and ensure that they and their employees are aware and trained in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Policy.

The Clerk's Department will be responsible for the overall administration of this policy.

The Chief Administrative Officer's responsibility is to ensure that this policy is adhered to at all times.

Policy Requirements

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

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (OADA) is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment and premises. This policy covers customer services, transportation, information and communications and employment standards, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 191/11. This document will be revised as applicable provincial policy directives related to the OADA are released and approved into regulation.

The Town maintains policies governing how it shall meet its requirements under the AODA; said policies are available in an accessible format upon request.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town has established an Accessibility Advisory Committee, with a majority of the members being persons with disabilities. The Committee shall advise Council about the requirements and implementation of AODA accessibility standards, including access for persons with disabilities to a municipal building or premises, and other matters for which the Municipality may seek advice.

Accessibility Plans and Policies

The Town produces a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Plan is posted on the Town's website and is available in accessible format, upon request. Progress on the Plan shall be provided annually and reported to Council and updated at least once every five years.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

The Town shall notify the public regarding the availability of accessible formats and communication supports and shall, upon request 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 Town 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 Town 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:

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

Procurement of Goods, Services, Facilities

When procuring goods, services or facilities, the Town 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 Town shall provide an explanation, upon request.

Training

All Town employees, volunteers and third parties providing goods and services to members of the public on the Town's behalf, as well as those who develop the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties, shall receive accessibility training.

This training shall include a review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation IASR (O. Reg. 191/11) and of the Human Rights Code, as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

The training provided shall be appropriate to the duties of the employee, volunteer or third party. Training shall take place as soon as practicable and on an ongoing basis as changes occur in the Town's policies; upon completion, the Town shall keep a record of the training provided, including the dates on which accessibility training took place.

Customer Service Standards

The Town of Hearst will use reasonable efforts, where possible, to ensure its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- The Town's goods and services are provided and communicated in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit the Town's goods and services.

Assistive Devices

Town employees, volunteers and third party contractors shall accommodate the use of personal assistive devices including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, scooters, and display boards. Exceptions may occur in situations where the Town has determined the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of any person in the premises.

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities may enter premises owned and operated by the Town accompanied by a service animal and keep the animal with them if the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law (for example, in food preparation areas as prohibited by Food Premises, R.R.O. 1990). If a service animal is excluded by law from premises, the Town 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.

If it is not readily apparent the animal is a service animal, the Town may ask the person with a disability for a letter from a qualified medical professional, a certificate of training, or a valid identification card.

Support Persons

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the Town permits both persons to enter the premises together. If the Town charges an admission fee to a support person, the Town 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.

The Town may require that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person when on Town premises or participating in the Town-run programs, but only if, after consulting with the person with a disability, Town staff determine that:

- a) 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

- b) 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 Town 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, goods used by persons with disabilities (ex: loss of elevator service), the Town 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. Such notices shall be posted in conspicuous places at the affected premises and on the Town's website.

Information and Communication Supports Standards

Upon request, the Town of Hearst will provide, or arrange for the provision of, accessible formats or communication supports for persons with disabilities.

These accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and in a way that takes into account the individual's accessibility needs. The Town will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. Such accessible documents and communication supports will be provided at a cost no greater than the regular cost charged to others.

If a document cannot be converted into an accessible format, the Town will provide an explanation or summary of such information in an accessible format.

Accessible Website and Web Content

The Town of Hearst will ensure that its website and web content published conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WGAG) 2.0, Level AA, except where it is not practicable. This applies to websites, web content and web-based applications that the Town controls directly or through a contractual relationship that allows for modification.

Feedback

Feedback from the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvement. The public and/or employees can provide feedback on the appended form, in the following manners:

- a) By mail or e-mail addressed to the Clerk's Department, P.O. Bag 5000, Hearst, Ontario P0L 1N0
- b) In person at Town Hall, 925 Alexandra Street, Hearst, Ontario.

All feedback received will be documented and responded to, if the member of the public provides his/her name, address and daytime telephone number. Information about the feedback process will be posted on the Town's website (www.hearst.ca) and/or in other appropriate locations.

Employment Standards

Recruitment

The Town of Hearst 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 Town shall consult with any applicant who requests an accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's disability. Successful applicants shall be notified about the Town's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities as part of their offer of employment.

Employee Supports

The Town shall inform employees of the policies used to support those with disabilities, including policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability. The Town will provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after they begin their employment and provide updated information to all employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employee

The Town will, when requested by an employee with a disability, consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for information that is required in order to perform the job, as well as information that is generally available to employees in the workplace. The Town 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 Town is aware of the needs for accommodation, this information shall be provided, as soon as practicable. In addition, this information shall be provided, with the employee's consent, to the person designated to provide assistance. This information shall undergo review when:

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

Documented Individual Accommodation Plans

The Town shall develop a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The individual accommodation plan shall include:

- If requested, any information regarding accessible formats and communication supports provided to the employee;
- If required, individualized workplace emergency response information; and
- Any other accommodations that are to be provided.

Return to Work Process

The Town shall have in place a documented return to work process for employees returning to work due to disability and requiring disability-related accommodations. This return to work process shall outline the steps that the Town shall take to facilitate the employee's return to work.

Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment

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

Transportation Standards

Community Transportation

The Town is a partner of *the Hearst Community Transportation Commission*, is responsible for the management of the transportation service for the elderly and those persons with a handicap and a third party is contracted for the operation of the service.

The Town shall provide information on the accessibility features of its specialized transportation service and shall make this information available in an accessible format, upon request.

Taxicabs

Owners and operators of taxicabs licensed by the Town are prohibited from charging additional fares or fees to persons with disabilities and for the storage of mobility aids or assistive devices. The Town requires that taxicabs licensed by the Town make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

The Town shall comply with AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards, including consultation requirements, if applicable, when undertaking new construction and redevelopment of public spaces.

Definitions:

Accessible Format may include, but is 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 customers, volunteers and employees with disabilities can participate in the experiences and services available – accommodations vary depending on unique needs.

Communication supports may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentive communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

Communications means the interaction between two or more persons or entities, or any combination of them, where information is provided, sent or received.

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:

- 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, loss of physical co-ordination, 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 development disability,
- c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) A mental disorder, or
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Employee means anyone that is employed by the Town.

Information includes data, facts and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital images and that conveys meaning.

Organization means any organization in the public or private sector and includes a municipality.

Service animals means an animal for a person with a disability if:

- 1) 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 a the vest or harness worn by the animal, or
- 2) 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) A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
 - b) A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;

- c) A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario;
- d) A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
- e) A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
- f) A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
- g) A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
- h) A member of the college of Psychologists of Ontario; or
- i) A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

Support person, in relation to a person with a disability, means another person who accompanies him/her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Unconvertible means 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.

Volunteer includes a person who is recruited directly by the Town and voluntarily undertakes a task on behalf of the Town.



Corporation of the Town of Hearst

NOTICE OF SERVICE DISRUPTION

There will be a scheduled service disruption at

on _____

from _____ until _____

The service disruption will involve:

Thank you for your patience in this matter.



Accessible Customer Service

Feedback Form

Thank you for visiting **the Corporation of the Town of Hearst.** We value all of our customers and strive to meet everyone's needs.

Please tell us the date and time of your visit: _____

Did we respond to your customer service needs today? YES NO

Was our customer service provided to you in an accessible manner?
 YES SOMEWHAT NO (please explain below)

Did you have any problems accessing our goods and services?
 YES (please explain below) SOMEWHAT (please explain below) NO

Please add any other comments you may have:

Contact information (optional)*: _____

Thank you!