



Report to: General Committee

Report Date: June 1, 2009

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**SUBJECT:** Accessible Customer Service Policy: Ontario Regulation 429/07

**PREPARED BY:** Warren Rupnarain, Accessibility Coordinator ext. 3542

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the report dated June 1, 2009 “Accessible Customer Service Policy, Ontario Regulation 429/07” be received;
2. That council approve the “Accessible Customer Service Policy” (Attachment 1).
3. And that staff be authorized directed to do all things necessary to implement the actions set out in this report.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

**Not Required**

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to seek council’s approval of the “Accessible Customer Service Policy” (Attachment 1).

**BACKGROUND:**

In a report to General Committee on March 2, 2009, Committee was advised of the mandatory accessible customer service training requirements under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. The regulation was made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (“AODA”).

Training is still required for a number of staff, volunteers, members of Council, Board and advisory committee members. These training needs will be addressed as outlined in Attachment 2.

**OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

Accessible customer service training is one aspect of the policies, practices and procedures that must be established by municipalities. Additional aspects that must be addressed in the policies, practices and procedures are:

- Support Persons
- A Feedback Process
- Service Disruption
- Service Animals
- Format of Documents
- Assistive Devices

Under the proposed policy, the Town of Markham will:

- Welcome **support persons** in all Town of Markham owned and operated public facilities.
- Establish a **feedback process** to address complaints or concerns.
- Provide notice of **service disruptions** affecting facilities or services.
- Allow **service animals** onto all Town of Markham owned and operated public facilities.
- Provide documents in **alternative formats** upon request, in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.
- Allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal **assistive devices** to obtain, or benefit from the services offered by the Town of Markham.

In accordance with the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07, the proposed policy, practices and procedures is consistent with the following principles:

- Goods or services shall 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 must 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 must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

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**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The Town will incur expense if an individual requests a document in an alternative format. Alternative formats can include putting documents onto a CD, providing documents in audio format or reading a document to a customer with a disability.

Many alternative formats can be produced in house at no or minimal cost. A prime example of this is printing documents in a larger font size. One of the most expensive alternative formats would be translation into braille. For example, if an individual would like a fifteen hundred word document translated into Braille, it would cost approximately fifty dollars.

The most expensive alternative format is sign language interpretation. Sign language interpreters must be paid a two hour minimum at fifty five dollars per hour and the interpreter's travel expenses must be paid for as well.

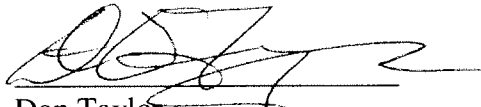
Staff report no requests for documents in alternative formats in recent years. However, public awareness of this policy may generate requests for alternative formats. At this time, we do not know the extent to which requests will be made. Requests for alternative formats will be monitored over the next six months. If numerous requests arise, funding will be requested in the 2010 budget.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 aligns directly with the Town of Markham's "Building Markham's Future Together" Diversity priority.

**DEPARTMENTS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Sustainability Office  
Human Resources  
Communications & Community Relations  
Contact Centre  
Clerk's Department  
Legal Department

**RECOMMENDED****BY:**  
Don Taylor,

Manager, Executive Operations

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John Livey, CAO

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1 – Town of Markham: Accessible Customer Service Policy

Attachment 2 – Training Schedule

# Draft Accessible Customer Service Policy

DEPARTMENT	TOWN WIDE	EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2010
SUBJECT	Accessible Customer Service Policy	
AUTHORITY	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005; Ontario Regulation 429/07 (Accessible Customer Service Standard)	

## PURPOSE

The Town of Markham is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and visitors. To do this, we must recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents and visitors and respond by striving to provide goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all. As an employer, and a provider of goods and services, the Town of Markham is committed to ensuring its goods services are provided in an accessible manner.

The Town of Markham will promote accessibility through the implementation of this policy and by ensuring it considers people with disabilities. To do this we must ensure our policies, procedures and practices address **integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity**.

## PRINCIPLES

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the following:

- That goods and services be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and others, will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanently, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services.
- Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity – equal to that given to others – to obtain, use and benefit from the goods and services.

## PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES:

Procedures and practices will strive to reflect or achieve the following:

- Communication will be considered, in a manner that takes into consideration a person's disability.
- Staff will receive appropriate training related to accessible customer service training in relation to their role.
- People with disabilities accompanied by a guide dog or service animal will be permitted in those areas of the premises owned or operated by the Town of Markham that are open to the public.
- Persons with disabilities, accompanied by a support person, will be permitted to be accompanied by that support person in premises open to the public.

- Where admission fees are charged for support persons, advance notice will be given.
- Notice will be provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access Town of Markham services are temporarily disrupted.
- People can offer feedback on how the Town of Markham is providing services to person's with a disability by contacting the Contact Centre. .
- The Town of Markham will allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the Town of Markham.

## **PRACTICES**

### **Support Persons**

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

The Town of Markham will allow people with disabilities, who require, to be accompanied by a support person in all Town owned and operated public facilities. *The Town of Markham reserves the right to request 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.*

- Member of public should notify a staff member the presence of the support person.
- Where admission fees are charged for support persons, advance notice will be given.
- If there is confidential information to be disclosed, consent must be received from the person with the disability.

### **Feedback Process**

To submit a complaint:

Should a member of the public wish to make a complaint regarding the service they have received:

- Complaints or concerns may be outlined in person, via e-mail or telephone to:
- The director of the department where services were provided; or
- The Town of Markham Contact Centre.
- The information to be provided by the member of the public should include their personal contact information, the date, a description of the complaint, and what the member of the public requests to resolve the complaint. This information and the complaint resolution will be recorded in the Town's Customer Request Management software.
- The department manager will attempt to resolve the complaint in a timely manner, with the assistance of the Accessibility Coordinator.
- The member of the public will be contacted once a resolution has been reached.

To submit a suggestion:

Should a member of the public wish to provide the Town of Markham with a suggestion on how to improve our service:

- Member of the public can contact the Contact Centre and provide suggestions via email, telephone or in person.
- All suggestions will be recorded in the Customer Request Management software.
- Member of the public will be notified in a timely manner of how the Town of Markham will proceed with their suggestion.
- Staff response should include: an explanation of how the suggestion will be implemented, a response indicating further investigation or an explanation why we are unable to implement the suggestion.

All complaints and suggestions should be recorded, and forwarded to the responsible manager, department head and the Human Resources Department

## Service Disruption

If, in order to obtain, use or benefit from a provider's goods or services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of the provider (for example, elevators) and if there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, the Town of Markham shall give notice of the disruption in the form and manner established by the Town's notice policy.

Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

Notice will be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider of goods or services, as well as by posting it on the Town of Markham website.

If the Town of Markham website should expect a temporary service disruption, advance notice where possible, keeping with the conditions of the service disruption section of this policy, shall be provided on the website.

## Service Animals

For the purpose of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:

- A "guide dog," as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*, or
- A "service animal" for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability, if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for the reasons relating to his or her disability

The Town of Markham will allow the person and the animal onto all Town of Markham owned and operated public facilities, and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

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

## Format of Documents

Should the Town of Markham be required to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the Town of Markham shall give the person the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Material printed in-house and publications produced on behalf of the Town of Markham should contain a note indicating, "alternate formats are available upon request" and include relevant contact information.

The Town of Markham and the person with a disability will try to agree upon the format to be used for the document or information, subject to feasibility requirements of this policy.

Alternative formats that should be considered by the Town of Markham and the person with the disability will include, but are not limited to:

- Alternative Formats

Requests for alternative formats should be honoured in the most practical manner depending on the media chosen, the size and complexity of the document, the quality and source of the documents, the feasibility of the request (including the cost) and the number of documents to be converted. It should be noted that when a request for one of these formats is received and deemed feasible, staff should make every attempt to respond to the request in the most practical manner and to the satisfaction of the requestor. If it is determined that the format requested is not feasible, then other alternative methods of providing the information should be explored that will still meet the needs of the requestor (e.g. explaining the information verbally etc.).

- Staff members receives request from member of the public for alternative format.
- Employee fills out alternative format request form.
- Forwards request onto the responsible manager.
- The responsible manager, and Accessibility Coordinator will determine feasibility, if feasible;
- Proceeds with alternative format request.
- If not feasible; contact individual with feasible solution.

Feasibility will be determined based upon cost in relation to size of document and time associated with processing document requests.

The time frame attached to the conversion process varies depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents and number of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted.

Conversion shall be processed in-house wherever possible. When a member of the public requests a piece of Town documentation in an alternate format, the responsible department (and not the public requestor) shall be responsible for the cost of the conversion to the alternate format.



For greater clarity, if a request by a person with a disability is made pursuant to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Act, the requester shall be responsible for payment of the prescribed fee but not for any costs associated with conversion to an alternate format

In-house printing, where possible, should adhere to the CNIB's Clear Print Standards.

## **Training**

The Town of Markham shall ensure that the following persons receive training about the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities:

- Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.
- Every person who participates in developing the Town's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.
- The training will include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this policy and instruction about the following matters:
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability, as outline in this policy and procedures.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person, as outlined in this policy and procedures.
- How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.
- The Town of Markham will log and retain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, and how the training was completed.
- When there are changes to polices, practices and procedures, updated training will occur.

## **Assistive Devices**

The Town of Markham will allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the Town of Markham.

Should a person with a disability be unable to access the Town's services through the use of their own personal assistive devices, the Town of Markham will ensure the following measures:

- Determine if service is inaccessible, based upon individual requirements.
- Assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.

- Notify person with disability of alternative service and how they can access the service, temporarily or on a permanent basis.

## **Contact Information**

For more information about this policy, or questions related to accessibility at the Town of Markham, please contact us:

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Accessibility Coordinator

Town of Markham

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Markham, ON L3R 9W3

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Fax: 905-477-7000

Email: [wrupnarain@markham.ca](mailto:wrupnarain@markham.ca)

## **Accessible Customer Service Training Schedule – May to December 2009**

Accessible customer service training, training was provided to staff through facilitated sessions on April 27, 28 and May 1, 2009. An additional session will be offered on September 21, 2009 to train members of Council and staff who could not attend any of the previous sessions.

In the interim, training will continue through an online training course entitled “Serve-Ability”. “Serve-Ability” is a forty-five minute online training course that was created by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario for organizations to use to train their staff.

“Serve-Ability” provides users with an overview of the accessible customer service standard, information on how to interact with people with different types of disabilities and has quiz questions throughout the course.

While “Serve-Ability” is not as rich and comprehensive as the facilitated sessions that took place a few weeks ago, it is very cost effective as it is free, and also constitutes compliance with the accessible customer service standard.

A brochure is being developed to train volunteers, Board and advisory committee members. The brochure explains how to interact with people with different types of disabilities. In order to ensure accountability, volunteers, Board and advisory committee members will be required to sign a document confirming that he or she has read and comprehended the brochure. Since a volunteer, Board or advisory committee member is not a full or part time member, providing them with an informative brochure is considered compliant with Ontario Regulation 429/07.

