



CATARAQUI REGION  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) – Customer Service Policy

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Document Revisions

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## 1 PURPOSE / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is a law that was passed by the Province of Ontario, which allows the government to develop and enforce specific standards for accessibility. The standards are intended to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to customer service, transportation, the built environment, information and communication, and employment.

The customer service standard is the first standard developed under the AODA, through *Ontario Regulation 429/07* entitled “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service”, which came into effect on January 1, 2008. The Regulation establishes accessibility standards for the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties. Most public sector organizations are required to comply with the Regulations by January 1, 2010. Conservation authorities (CAs) need to comply by 2012, but if they are under contract to provide services to a party that needs to comply earlier then the CA needs to comply by that earlier date.

This policy has been drafted in accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*, and addresses the following:

- The provision of good and services to persons with disabilities;
- Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities;
- The use of service animals by persons with disabilities;
- The use of support persons by persons with disabilities;
- Customer feedback regarding the provisions of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- Training for all persons outlined in Section 2 below; and
- Notice of the availability and format of documents.

## 2 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all persons representing the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA). This requirement applies whether the person is an employee, board member, agent, consultant, volunteer, student, or otherwise a representative of the CRCA.

This policy applies to all services offered at facilities owned, leased, or operated by the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA), as well as public events hosted by the CRCA, regardless of where the event takes place.

## 3 MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

The Accessible Customer Service Policy has been written to comply with the Conservation Authority’s mission, vision and values statement. The Conservation Strategy was reviewed in 2000 resulting in a revised strategy. ***Cataraqui to 2020*** was adopted by the CRCA Board in March 2001 as our revised future direction.

### Mission

The objects of an authority are to establish and undertake, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals.

For the Authority to act wisely, and in a coordinated fashion, we must set goals and objectives as well as workplans and budgets toward achieving them. As part of the watershed conservation leadership role the CRCA will inform other bodies, interested parties and the public of the Authority’s goals, policies, programs and services and encourage understanding and support for them.

### Vision

The Vision of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority is intended to provide a view of the future. If our Vision is fully achieved, future generations may be able to experience a higher quality of life. Therefore, one of the most important things that the Authority envisions, is a watershed with environmentally aware and involved participants with a greater commitment to good stewardship. To this end, education is fundamental.

The Authority will also strengthen its association with other agencies effective in service delivery, as well as with citizens, community groups, and corporations. With a watershed based jurisdiction, we have a unique opportunity to cross political boundaries, just as natural resources cross these man-made limits.

Our vision is that the natural environment of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority watersheds will be conserved, that degraded natural resources will be restored, that our regional diversity will be valued by the watershed residents, and that the public will understand the role that everyone needs to play in resource management and resource enjoyment.

## **4 CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES**

### **4.1 The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities**

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) will use all reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- The CRCA's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities
- The provision of the CRCA's goods and services to persons with disabilities are integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities, unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the CRCA's goods and services; and
- Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use and benefit from the CRCA's goods and services

### **4.2 Communications with Persons with Disabilities**

All Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) communications will be written in a manner so that the intended audience understands the message clearly. This will be done using the principle of "plain language", which is defined as language that avoids obscurity, inflated vocabulary, and convoluted sentence structure.

When communicating with a person with a disability, the CRCA will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The CRCA will train all persons who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

### Telephone Services

The CRCA is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. The CRCA will train all relevant persons to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly, and to tailor their responses as much as possible in support of the individual.

The CRCA will offer to communicate with customers in person, by e-mail, or by teletype service (TTY). Bell Canada provides *Bell Relay* 24-hour service free of charge, contact 1-800-855-0511 or 711 from a TTY phone.

### Website Services

The CRCA is committed to maintaining its website and providing on-line resources that are fully accessible to our customer.

### Documentation

The CRCA is committed to providing accessible documentation, (e.g. letters, e-mail, mapping, etc.) to all of its customers. For this reason, documentation will be provided on a case-by-case basis in the following formats, upon request: hard copy; large-print; and, electronic.

The CRCA will answer any questions customers may have about the content of a document in person, through the regular postal service, or by telephone, or e-mail.

### Additional Communication Services

Should a customer require an alternative form of communication not listed above, such as a document printed in Braille or the need for the services of a sign language interpreter, the CRCA will make every possible attempt to accommodate those needs. In order to accommodate certain requests and services, the customer may be required to provide advance notice to the CRCA.

The costs of any additional communication services will be covered by the department that normally handles the information and services.

## **4.3 Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities**

The CRCA is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However, temporary disruptions in the CRCA's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the CRCA's control or knowledge.

The CRCA will provide notice of the disruption to the public, including:

- Information about the reason for the disruption;
- Its anticipated duration; and,
- A description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available.

Where the disruption to the service or facility is planned, the CRCA will provide notice in advance of the disruption. However, in the case where the disruption is unplanned, the CRCA will provide notice as soon as possible.

When temporary disruptions occur to the CRCA's services or facilities, the CRCA will provide notice by posting the information in relevant visible locations, on the CRCA website [www.crc.ca](http://www.crc.ca), and/or by any other method that is reasonable and applicable under the circumstances. Other methods of notification may include e-mail messages to stakeholders, and the use of various forms of local media.

## **4.4 Assistive Devices**

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the CRCA's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the CRCA has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability, the health and safety of others on the premises or the CRCA's facilities and natural habitat.

The CRCA may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist them in obtaining, using and benefiting from the CRCA's goods and services, where the CRCA has such other measures available.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

#### 4.5 Service Animals

A person with a disability may enter premises owned or operated by the CRCA accompanied by a service animal, and may keep the animal with them if the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If the service animal is excluded by law, the CRCA will ensure that alternative means are available to enable the person with disability to obtain, use or benefit from the CRCA goods and services.

#### 4.6 Support Persons

A person with a disability may enter premises owned or operated by the CRCA with a support person, and is entitled to have access to the support person at all times while on the premises.

The CRCA may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on the CRCA premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others. In such a situation, the CRCA will waive the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists.

In situations where privacy and consent issues are applicable, a support person may be subject to the same confidentiality requirements as the person with a disability that they are assisting. A support person may be required to sign a waiver with respect to any privacy or confidentiality issues.

In order to accommodate a person with a disability and their support person at an event where attendance is by pre-arranged seating, advanced booking may be required. Admission requirements will be clearly posted on the CRCA website, and at the entrances and customer service areas of all applicable facilities.

#### Admission Fee

Where an admission fee is charged to gain access to an event, facility, or service, and the revenue from the fee is payable directly to the CRCA, the support person is permitted to attend and shall pay the regular fee, unless attending for health and safety reasons as specified above.

#### 4.7 Feedback

The CRCA is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public it serves. Feedback from the public is welcomed, as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of goods and services to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format, or through other methods. All feedback will be directed to the Administrative Assistant, and customers can expect an acknowledgment of their message within five (5) business days.

Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public, and notice of the process will be posted on the CRCA website [www.crca.ca](http://www.crca.ca) and/or in other relevant locations.

#### 4.8 Training

The CRCA will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies receive training as required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*.

The content of the training will include:

- A review of the purposes of the AODA;
- The requirements of the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)*;
- Instruction on the CRCA policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;

- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the CRCA goods or services;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal; and,
- Information about the equipment or devices available on the CRCA premises that my help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

#### Timeline for Training

For all persons described in Section 2 of this policy that are involved with the CRCA at the time that this policy is approved by the Board, training must be completed by May 31, 2010. In all other instances, training will be provided as soon as practicable upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties. As well, training will be done on a regular basis as updates become available and as deemed necessary.

#### Records of Training

The CRCA will keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided, the number of individuals to who it is provided and the nature of the training that is provided. Each department will be responsible for providing this information to the Finance Coordinator to update personnel records. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for administrative purposes. All personal information collected will be managed in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*.

## **5 AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS**

All documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*, including the CRCA Accessibility Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*.

Where a person with a disability requests a document in an alternate format, the CRCA will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in the format that is requested and that takes the person's disability into account.

Notice of availability of all documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)* will be posted on the CRCA website, and will be made available through the Administration Office.

## **6 AMENDMENTS**

All amendments to the Accessibility Customer Service Policy must be approved by the Board.

## 7 DEFINITIONS

### Assistive Device

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of organizations covered by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*. Assistive devices may include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, oxygen tanks, and electronic communication devices.

### Braille

A system of writing for the visually impaired that uses characters made up of raised dots.

### Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA)

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) is a body corporate established in 1964 under the Conservation Authorities Act. The CRCA provides watershed management, environmental planning, forestry, habitat protection, conservation education, and outdoor recreational services. Our watershed area includes 11 municipalities from Greater Napanee to Brockville.

### Disability

- 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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a service animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) a condition of mental health 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) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

### Service Animal

Any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability, where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability, or where the person provides a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability. Service animals may include a variety of animals used to assist with sight or hearing, to detect seizures, or to provide any other form of assistance necessary to a person with a disability.

### Support Person

A person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist them with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

### TTY

A teletypewriter, teletype terminal, or text telephone, which is a special device that allows people, who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired to use the telephone to communicate, by allowing them to type text messages. A TTY is required at both ends of the conversation in order to communicate.