

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Policy

Background

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, were created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The standards came into effect on January 1, 2008. The regulation sets out the obligations for certain persons, businesses and other organizations to provide goods or services in a way that is accessible to people with disabilities in Ontario.

This policy will ensure that people with disabilities are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) programs and services.

Policy Statement

The UTRCA is committed to providing optimal customer service to all of its clients and customers. Our goal is to ensure that people with disabilities are provided with an equal opportunity to enjoy the UTRCA programs and services as people without disabilities.

General Principles

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to ensure compliance with Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. As part of compliance, the UTRCA will ensure that its programs and services are:

- provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- communicated in a manner that takes into account an individual's disability;
- identical to those available to people without disabilities, unless an alternate measure is necessary to ensure a person with a disability can obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services.

Assistive Devices, Service Animals and Support Persons

It is understood that people with disabilities may require the use of assistive devices, service animals and/or support persons to access the UTRCA's programs and services. Any restrictions under other regulations that may interfere with such assistance will be clearly identified and the UTRCA will use reasonable efforts to make alternatives available to the customer. In the event where a fee is applicable and a support person is required by the customer with a disability, the support person will be permitted free of charge.

This information will be included in all marketing publications offered by the UTRCA as well as on the UTRCA website (www.thamesriver.on.ca).

Temporary Service Interruptions

Periodically, interruptions in UTRCA operations or services may take place. These may be planned events, such as scheduled maintenance procedures, or unexpected occurrences, such as power outages. Regardless, the UTRCA will strive to ensure that our customers and clients are aware of any such interruption and the impact that it may cause, in advance of the interruption if possible or soon after if no forewarning is possible. The communication will include key information with respect to the reason for and duration of the interruption, and alternatives to the services being offered.

Training for Staff

The AODA clearly outlines the training requirements for all UTRCA staff, volunteers, contractors and third parties that act on our behalf with respect to the policy, practices and regulations. Such training will be provided to current staff, and will be part of the regular orientation for all new staff. All staff will be trained, but the level of training received will be based on that position's level of interaction with the public. Records will be kept to verify that training has taken place.

Training will include the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the standards. It will also include but not be limited to, interacting and communicating with people with various disabilities, interacting with people who use assistive devices, service animals and/or support person, and use of assistive devices and equipment associated with the services that we provide on our premises, as well as how to handle those situations when a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing our goods and services.

Availability, Document Formats

As per UTRCA practice, all policies, procedures and regulations are available to the public upon request. When providing these documents to a person with a disability, the disability will be considered when determining the format in which the information will be shared.

Information will be posted on the UTRCA website (www.thamesriver.on.ca), Administration Office (new name of the building) and Conservation Area park offices with respect to the availability of documents as outlined in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Feedback and Suggestions

The UTRCA regularly evaluates the level of service being offered to its customers. The most effective evaluation tool is the feedback received from visitors and clients. Comments can be provided by email (info@thamesriver.on.ca), by telephone, in person or in writing. Occasionally, surveys regarding our facilities and services are also available.

All comments and feedback will be reviewed by appropriate staff and steps will be taken to determine the best way to address any issues brought forward (e.g. annual policy review meetings, unit meetings, etc.) in a timely fashion.

Information regarding receiving and evaluating feedback will be made available on the UTRCA website (www.thamesriver.on.ca) and other appropriate locations (conservation areas, administration office).