



Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority Accessible Customer Service Policy

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for all goods and services provided.

1. Scope

- a) This policy applies to the provision of goods and services at premises owned and operated by GRCA
- b) This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors or other third parties that act on behalf of GRCA including when the provision of goods and services occurs off the premises of GRCA such as the Ganaraska Forest Centre and public programs and public meetings etc.
- c) The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only applies to the provision of goods and services that take place at premises owned and operated by GRCA.
- d) This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of GRCA's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

2. Definitions

Assistive Device – a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Disability – the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

- 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;

- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under *the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Guide Dog – a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in *Ontario Regulation 58* under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Service Animal – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, 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 reasons relating to his or her disability; 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.

Service Dog – as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562*, a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- it is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- the person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires a service dog.

Support Person – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

3. General Principles

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, this policy addresses the following:

- A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities;
- B. The Use of Assistive Devices;
- C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs;
- D. The Use of Support Persons;
- E. Notice of Service Disruptions;
- F. Customer Feedback;
- G. Training; and
- H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents.

A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality of goods and services;
- allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own way, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

B. The Use of Assistive Devices

Customer's own assistive device(s):

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from GRCA's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where GRCA has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or others on the premises. In such situations, and others, GRCA may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist in obtaining, using and benefiting from GRCA's goods and services, where other measures are available.

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

C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs

A person with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by the GRCA 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. If a service animal is excluded by law, the GRCA will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use and benefit from GRCA's goods and services.

Other types of service animals are not permitted into food service areas due to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*.

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that the service animal is kept in control at all times.

Applicable Laws:

The *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*, normally does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, sold or offered for sale. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, GRCA may request verification from the customer. Verification may include:

- a letter from a regulated health professional (physician, nurse practitioner, nurse, occupational therapist, chiropractor, physiotherapist, audiologist, optometrist, psychologist and psychotherapist) confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

D. The Use of Support Persons

If a customer with a disability is accompanied by a support person, GRCA will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person. There may

be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations GRCA will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, written consent will be obtained by GRCA from the customer, prior to the conversation taking place.

If GRCA requires a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person to protect their health and safety while on the premises, any fee or fare for the support person will be waived.

E. Notice of Service Disruption

A disruption in service may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of GRCA. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customer's with disabilities rely on to access or use GRCA's goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notifications will include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted, the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable;
- reason for the disruption;
- anticipated duration; and
- a description of alternative services or options.

The notice will be posted in reasonable places. When possible, disruptions that are known in advance will be posted on the GRCA websites (www.grca.on.ca & www.ganaraskaforestcentre.ca).

F. Customer Feedback

GRCA is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all of its customers. Feedback from customers and/or third parties is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all customers, and notice of the process will be made available on the GRCA websites (www.grca.on.ca & www.ganaraskaforestcentre.ca). Feedback forms, along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request. Completed feedback forms should be directed to:

Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
2216 County Road 28
Port Hope ON L1A 3V8

Phone: (905) 885-8173
Fax: (905) 885-9824
info@grca.on.ca

Alternatively, accessibility concerns can be directed to any GRCA employee at the phone number above, who will then forward them to the appropriate person. If they wish to be contacted about their feedback, persons must provide their name and contact information.

G. Training

Training will be provided to:

- a) all employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors or other third parties that act on behalf of GRCA; for example: consultants hired by GRCA to facilitate a public meeting;
- b) those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions:

As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing GRCA services.
- GRCA's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training Schedule:

GRCA will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors that act on our behalf. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Record of Training:

GRCA will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

H. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents

GRCA shall notify customers that the documents related to the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service* are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous area owned and operated by GRCA, the GRCA websites (www.grca.on.ca & www.ganaraskaforestcentre.ca) and/or any other reasonable method.

4. Administration

Any questions about this Policy should be referred to the contact information noted above.

The GRCA are committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this Policy before considering the impact on persons with disabilities. In the event that we do modify this Policy, we will post the updated Policy on our website and make it available to you upon request.