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# SVCA Accessibility Policy

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# Accessibility Policy

## Intent

Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity. SVCA recognizes the diverse needs of our stakeholders, residents, and customers and will respond by striving to provide goods, services, programs, and facilities that are accessible to all.

It is SVCA's policy that its training, working, and service environments will be maintained free from discrimination and harassment as prohibited by the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) (AODA)*. SVCA upholds the principle that every individual has the right to equitable treatment with respect to employment, services, goods, facilities, and accommodation without discrimination in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC).

## Definitions

**Accessible formats:** May include large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

**Assistive devices:** Used to replace, compensate, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. They include a broad range of items including mobility aids such as prosthetics, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, medical devices such as ventilators, respiratory equipment, and sensory assistance such as communication aids, reading and writing devices, and hearing aids.

**Communication supports:** May include captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

**Disability:** As defined in Section 10 of the Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990 c. H.19.

- 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 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;
- b. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c. A learning disability, or 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 animals:** As defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent as a result of

visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal 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 such as doctors, psychologists, audiologists, and optometrists confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**Support person:** As defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* shall mean any person, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend who accompanies a person with a disability to assist with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs or with access to goods, services, or facilities.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all SVCA staff (full-time, part-time, and term), as well as third parties working on behalf of SVCA, whether the person does so as an employee, contractor, Board Director, volunteer, student placement, or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing SVCA's policies governing the provision of goods, services, or facilities to members of the public or other third parties.

## **Guidelines**

### **1. Accessibility Plan**

SVCA will establish, implement, maintain, and document a multi-year accessibility plan in accordance with the AODA. The multi-year accessibility plan will outline SVCA's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements of the standards developed under the AODA. The multi-year accessibility plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years in consultation with municipal accessibility advisory committees. The plan will be posted on SVCA's website and shall be made available in an accessible format with complimentary communication supports, upon request.

### **2. Training**

SVCA is committed to ensuring training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards to all employees, Board Directors, volunteers, students, and all other persons who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the conservation authority.

Training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the Human Rights Code shall be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers, and other persons. Every person shall be trained as soon as practicable.

SVCA shall keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided, and the names of individuals trained. Training will also be provided in respect to changes in the Accessibility Policy on an ongoing basis. Accessibility training will include the following elements:

- A review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*;
- How to provide goods, services or facilities in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that considers their disabilities;

- The process for people to provide feedback to SVCA about its provision of goods, services, or facilities to persons with disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person to access goods, services, or facilities; and
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing SVCA's goods, services, or facilities.

### **3. Feedback Process**

Feedback from the public is appreciated as it may identify areas which require change and encourage continuous service improvement.

Feedback can be provided to SVCA on its delivery of goods, services, or facilities to persons with disabilities:

- By mail addressed to: Accessibility Officer, 1078 Bruce Rd 12, Formosa, ON N0G 1W0.
- By telephone: 519-364-1255 ext. 221
- In person at: SVCA Administration Office, 1078 Bruce Rd 12, Formosa, ON N0G 1W0.
- Or by email to: [accessibility@svca.on.ca](mailto:accessibility@svca.on.ca)

The Feedback Form can be obtained from the SVCA [website](#).

Responding to feedback:

- All feedback on accessible customer service, regardless of how it is received, should be directed initially to the [Accessibility Officer](#) for the feedback to be reviewed.
- If the feedback form indicates that the customer wishes to be contacted, the Accessibility Officer will acknowledge receipt of the feedback within a timely manner.
- Where possible, complaints will be acknowledged. The process to begin addressing complaints will begin as soon as possible.
- The Accessibility Officer will forward feedback to the appropriate Department Manager.
- A recommendation to address feedback received will be jointly prepared by the relevant Department Manager and the Accessibility Officer and provided to the General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer.
- The Accessibility Officer, or where unable to do so, the Department Manager will respond to the feedback obtained within fifteen 15 business days.

### **4. Notice of Temporary Disruptions**

Temporary disruptions in SVCA services or at facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within SVCA's control or knowledge.

SVCA will make every reasonable effort to 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, which may be in lieu.

If the disruption is anticipated, SVCA will provide a reasonable amount of advance notice of the disruption. SVCA will provide notice by any method that may be reasonable under the circumstances, as soon as possible, including but not limited to: SVCA's website

([www.saugeenconservation.ca](http://www.saugeenconservation.ca)), social media postings, and through the installation of temporary signage.

### **5. Support Persons**

Persons with disabilities may enter any property or facility owned or operated by SVCA with a support person and have access to the support person while on the premises.

SVCA may require a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person while on SVCA property in situations where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from SVCA's goods, services, or facilities, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable.

### **6. Service Animals**

Persons with a disability may enter properties or facilities owned and operated by SVCA accompanied by a service animal. The animal will be permitted to stay with the disabled person if the public only has access to the premises provided it is not otherwise excluded by law. If the service animal is excluded by law from the premises, SVCA will make every reasonable effort to provide other means of assistance for the disabled person to obtain, use, or benefit from SVCA's goods, services, or facilities.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, SVCA may ask the disabled person for a letter from a qualified regulated health professional.

It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to be in care and control of the service animal, always.

## **Information and Communications Standards (Reg. 191/11, Part II)**

### **1. Emergency Procedures, Plans or Public Safety Information**

SVCA will, upon request, provide emergency procedures, plans, and public safety information in an accessible format or with communication support, as soon as practicable.

### **2. Accessible Formats**

When requested, SVCA will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats or communication supports for persons with disabilities, where able to without undue financial hardship and with the resources available.

These accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and in a way that considers the individual needs of a person with a disability. SVCA 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 costs charged to others.

### **3. Websites and Web Content**

SVCA will ensure the official website and web content conforms to the Worldwide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA criteria. Except where

meeting this requirement is not practicable, this conformity applies to websites, web, and social media content, as well as web-based applications that are controlled directly or through a contractual relationship that allows for the modification of the product and to web content.

## **Employment Standards (Reg. 191/11, Part III)**

### **1. Recruitment, Assessment, and Selection**

SVCA is committed to equal consideration of candidates during the recruitment, assessment, and selection process. Job applicants, including new and existing SVCA employees, will be notified of accommodation options for persons with disabilities in its application process.

Not all SVCA positions can be made to accommodate persons with disabilities. In cases where accommodation due to a disability is requested, SVCA will consider whether the position can, with adjustments, meet the needs of the applicant.

When making offers of employment, SVCA will notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

### **2. Informing Employees of Supports**

SVCA will inform employees of its policies, and any updates to such policies, used to support employees with disabilities. SVCA will provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after commencing employment. These policies outline how a particular position can consider the employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

### **3. Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees**

SVCA shall, 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 that is required for their job to be performed. SVCA shall consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

## **Workplace Emergency Response Information**

SVCA is committed to ensuring the safety of all employees. Customized workplace emergency response planning shall be carried out for employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that an individualized plan is necessary. This plan shall be prepared as soon as practicable after SVCA becomes aware of the need for accommodation.

SVCA shall review the customized workplace emergency response plan when the employee moves to a different physical location, if the employee's accommodation needs change, and when the organization reviews all general emergency response policies.

## **Performance Management, Career Development and Advance and Redeployment**

SVCA shall consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and any individual accommodation plans when carrying out any performance management, career development, and advancement discussions. When reassigning employees to other positions as an alternative to layoff when a particular position has been eliminated, SVCA shall also consider the employee's accessibility needs due to his/her disability and any prepared accommodation plan.

## **Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) (Reg. 191/11, Part IV.1)**

SVCA will comply with the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) when engaging in the construction and redevelopment of publicly accessible spaces, in accordance with the legal requirements.

### **Resources**

- Government of Ontario [Accessibility in Ontario \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-in-ontario\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-in-ontario)
- [Ontario's Human Rights Code | Legislative Assembly of Ontario](https://www.ola.org/en/offices-divisions-branches/library-research/research-papers/ontarios-human-rights-code) (https://www.ola.org/en/offices-divisions-branches/library-research/research-papers/ontarios-human-rights-code)
- [World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/\)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/)

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years and updated as needed. If any changes or updates are made, all employees will be given updated copies within 30 days of the updated version of the policy being prepared.

### **Effective Date**

Policy approved on: May 16, 2024

Policy amended on: N/A

## **Accessibility Policy**

### **Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have read and understand the Accessibility Policy of Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority. Further, I agree to adhere to this policy and will ensure that employees working under my direction adhere to this policy. I understand that if I violate the rules/procedures outlined in this policy, I may face corrective action, up to and including termination of employment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_