

HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL OF ONTARIO

Policy on Accessibility and Accommodation

Disponible en français.

This policy is available on the Internet at <http://www.hrto.ca> and in various accessible formats including Braille, audio and large print. For an alternative format or a paper copy, please contact the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario at Toll Free: 1-866-598-0322, Local: 416-326-1312, TTY Toll Free: 1-866-607-1240, TTY Local: 416-326-2027.

Please note the Tribunal has also issued a Practice Direction on Language Interpretation Services which is available on the Tribunal website at <http://www.hrto.ca> or by phone.

Summary

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (the Tribunal) wants to ensure that everyone who uses its services can ask for and receive accommodation (special arrangements) for their human rights related needs and be able to participate in its proceedings on an equal basis.

This policy explains some of the things that the Tribunal has done to ensure individuals can use its services without barriers. At the same time, individuals may have other needs that may need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. This policy sets out a process to let the Tribunal know about these situations so that it can work with individuals to make its services accessible to them.

Legal clinics and other organizations can also help people with accessibility issues. A list of these organizations is available by contacting the Tribunal.

Introduction

The Tribunal is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible environment in which all members of the public have equal access to its services and are treated with dignity and respect. The Tribunal aims to provide its services in accordance with the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the *Code*) and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

The Tribunal is committed to providing accommodation for needs related to race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status and disability (Code-related needs), unless to do so would cause undue hardship. Disability includes physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, mental health disabilities, and “invisible” disabilities such as learning disabilities or environmental sensitivities.

Principles

The following principles will guide the Tribunal in making its processes accessible:

- Services should be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of members of the public.
- Services should be provided in a manner that fosters physical and functional access to the Tribunal's processes and promotes the inclusion, and full participation of members of the public.
- All persons should be given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the Tribunal's services. Where required, individualized accommodation will be provided, short of undue hardship.

The Tribunal will be sensitive to the privacy concerns of those who seek accommodation.

Objectives of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all members of the public are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the *Code* with respect to accommodation and to set out in writing the Tribunal's procedures for accommodation.

Application of the Policy

This policy applies to all of the Tribunal's services. The Tribunal will promote equal access for all individuals including parties, witnesses and representatives, to fully participate in its processes, short of undue hardship. This policy applies to all the Tribunal's public offices and all Tribunal staff and members. The term member is used to designate all adjudicative positions at the Tribunal and includes the Chair, vice chairs and part-time members.

This policy will be applied in accordance with the *Code*, and relevant case law. People who are involved in Tribunal proceedings are entitled to accommodation from the Tribunal as provided under the *Code*. Requests for accommodation will be considered on an individualized basis. Please see the section **Requests for Accommodation** for information on how to make a request.

The Tribunal's Commitment to Accessibility

The Tribunal has identified a number of measures to promote a barrier-free built environment, to incorporate principles of universal design and to meet recurring accessibility needs. These are in addition to specific accommodations that may be requested on a case-by-case basis.

The Tribunal is located at 655 Bay Street, 14th Floor in Toronto between Elm Street and Gerrard Street. Drop-offs are best done on side streets such as Walton Street to the north of 655 Bay Street or Elm Street to the south. Public

parking, including accessible parking spots, is available underneath 655 Bay Street and nearby. The building is located close to the College and Dundas subway stops. The Dundas stop is wheelchair accessible. The building's front doors and elevators are accessible to wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices as are the Tribunal's common spaces, such as hearing rooms, mediation rooms, private meeting rooms, and washrooms.

Additional accessibility features of the Tribunal's premises include, but are not limited to, adjustable lighting, low extrinsic sound levels, hearing rooms which are equipped with sound amplification systems and accessible signage. In some circumstances accommodation of *Code*-related needs may include arranging hearings and mediations in accessible locations other than the Tribunal's hearing centres.

All of the Tribunal's informational materials, forms and notices to the public are available in print and on the Tribunal's website which follows the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. All documents created by the Tribunal are also available, upon request, in alternate formats to accommodate disability-related needs.

The Tribunal may be contacted by mail, email, facsimile, telephone and TTY line. Both phone lines have a toll free number. The use of message relay services, such as video and Bell Relay services, may be requested.

The Tribunal's Rules of Procedure state that the provisions of the Rules will be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the *Code*. For example, parties may request flexibility in scheduling or timelines to accommodate *Code*-related needs.

When requested to accommodate *Code*-related needs, the Tribunal will provide visual interpretation services, such as American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), real time captioning, intervenors to interpret in-person communication, and audio recordings of its hearings. Persons with disabilities may also provide a qualified interpreter or intervenor of their choice.

The Tribunal recognizes that some individuals require the use of support services to assist with daily needs including communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs. The Tribunal will work to accommodate such services but will not generally arrange for them.

The Tribunal further recognizes that some individuals may require the use of a service animal or assistive device to participate in the Tribunal's proceedings. The Registrar should be contacted in advance of the proceedings if any special arrangements are required for the animal or device.

As fragrances cause health problems for some individuals, the Tribunal will ask people who are attending at its premises to refrain from using scented products.

Where an accessibility or accommodation measure provided by the Tribunal becomes unavailable, the Tribunal will provide notice as soon as practicable and make reasonable arrangements to make alternate arrangements or reschedule a proceeding to ensure that it is accessible.

Requests for Accommodation

The Tribunal's Registrars are fully informed of this policy, and the requirements of the Code and will receive and respond to inquiries and requests for accommodation. If you require accommodation from the Tribunal, contact the relevant Registrar:

For New Applications, contact:

Richard Hennessy
Registrar
Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario
655 Bay St. 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2A3

Toronto: (416) 316-1519
Toll Free: 1-866-598-0322
TTY (Toronto): (416) 326-2027
TTY (Toll Free): 1-866-607-1240
Fax: (416) 326-2199
Fax (Toll Free): 1-866-355-6099
Email: HRTO.Registrar@ontario.ca

For Transitional Applications and Commission Referred Complaints contact:

Patricia M. Grenier
Registrar - Transition
Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario
655 Bay St. 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2A3

Toronto: (416) 314-8419
Toll Free: 1-866-598-0322
TTY (Toronto): (416) 314-2379
TTY (Toll Free): 1-800-424-1168
Fax: (416) 314-8743
Email: HRTO.Registrar-Transition@ontario.ca

The Registrars will work with you to make the Tribunal accessible in relation to your needs. Information necessary to understand the basis for an accommodation request and to allow the Tribunal to respond appropriately should be provided.

The Tribunal recognizes that accommodation needs may arise during any aspect of the process. If an accommodation issue comes to the attention of Tribunal staff, it will be directed to the appropriate Registrar. During Tribunal proceedings, a mediator or adjudicator may directly address a request, as appropriate, or refer the request to the Registrar.

Training

The Tribunal will provide training for the Registrars and for other Tribunal employees and members as appropriate. Training will ensure that Tribunal employees and members understand this policy, and understand how to undertake accessibility and accommodation measures in accordance with this policy, the *Code* and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

The Tribunal will maintain and update a document describing the Tribunal's accommodation/accessibility training, including the content of the training and details of when the training was provided and to whom.

The Tribunal will maintain and update a list of community contacts and resources that can assist the Tribunal in providing accommodation.

The Registrars will keep a record of all accommodation requests and action taken. Copies will be placed in specific case files as appropriate. The Tribunal will monitor its performance on an ongoing basis.

Feedback

Comments or complaints about the accessibility of the Tribunal or about accommodation provided by the Tribunal may be provided in accordance with the Tribunal's Policy on Public Complaints available on the Internet at <http://www.hrto.ca> or by contacting the Tribunal by phone.