



# University of Toronto

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OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT,  
HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUITY

## FOR INFORMATION

TO: Business Board

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AGENDA ITEM: 8

### ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

**Ontarians with Disabilities Act: University of Toronto Accessibility Plan, 2006-07**

### JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The plan has been recommended for approval by the Planning and Budget Committee, which is responsible for (a) the institutional planning process (of which this is a part) and (b) submissions to external agencies that include new policy positions. (The proposed plan will proceed to the Academic Board, whence to the Governing Council. It will also be reviewed by the University Affairs Board)

The plan is presented to the Business Board for information because of its responsibility for "personnel policy for administrative staff" (Terms of Reference, section 5.9).

### PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

This Plan reports on and builds upon the initiatives that were included in the 2005-06 Plan previously approved by Governing Council.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

2006-2007 is the fourth year that the University of Toronto has submitted an Accessibility Plan as required by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001. The Act requires institutions within the broad public sector to review their policies, programs and services as they impact upon persons with disabilities, and to develop annual accessibility plans that are intended to address existing barriers and prevent new barriers from being established.

The process of developing the Accessibility Plan is highly inclusive. Under the auspices of the Vice-President Human Resources and Equity, a broadly representative ODA Accessibility Planning Committee was established, consisting of seventy-eight members and including faculty,

staff, students, and alumni representing a range of stakeholders and constituencies. Some members of the Committee were selected because of their professional expertise in such areas as information technology, instructional design and architecture; others for their professional knowledge of disability and accommodation issues. In the preparation of the 2006-2007 Plan, a number of people with disabilities, both visible and invisible, were involved in identifying barriers and proposing initiatives. The work of the Committee was facilitated by Dr. Dana Sheikh, ODA Project Coordinator.

The Accessibility Planning Committee was divided into eight working sub-committees: Attitudes, Policy, Physical Facilities, Technology – Adaptive and Informational, Instructional Design, Student Life/Student Experience, Human Resources and Mental Health. These sub-committees assumed responsibility for developing the 2006-07 accessibility initiatives.

Every one of the fifty-seven initiatives identified in the 2005-2006 Plan was responded to and/or acted on in the past year. This report describes the work that was accomplished in each of these initiatives and demonstrates the breadth of commitment to accessibility across University units and departments. Particular highlights include: the compilation of a comprehensive generic list of accessibility training resources, involving UTSC, UTM, the Access Centre and the Office of Health and Well-Being Programs and Services, for the website; the organization of two conferences – one by Students for Barrier Free Access, titled “Student Leadership and Breaking Down Barriers”, and the other by the Office of Student Affairs, titled “Making Connections in Student Mental Health”; the completion of a Barrier Free Design Standards checklist by the Capital Projects Department and the involvement of Universal Design consultants in the planning of new capital projects; the development of guidelines and recommendations for accessible websites; and, a switch by Caretaking Services to “green” products, that are environmentally friendly, low in toxicity and suitable for use around individuals with chemical sensitivities.

Twenty-seven initiatives have been developed for the forthcoming year. A highlight of the 2006-07 Plan is the regrouping of these initiatives into four broad themes: Built Environment, Access to/Delivery of Academic Programs, Awareness/Education and Professional Development, and Accommodation/Services for Persons with Disabilities. This regrouping more adequately conveys the coherent picture of the University’s commitment to issues of accessibility.

At its meeting on August 28, 2006, the Accessibility Planning Committee endorsed the 2006-2007 Plan.

The approved Accessibility Plan will be submitted to the Ontario Government by September 30, 2006 and will be made public through the U of T website and through [accessibility.utoronto.ca](http://accessibility.utoronto.ca).

## **FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:**

Costs associated with the implementation of the plan are allocated from a variety of sources. The only offices to receive targeted government funding are the three Accessibility Offices – which have as their prime focus the provision of services to support the academic needs of our students. This past year, the University received approximately \$1.8m but spent \$2.5m across the three offices. The cost for the provision of the required services regularly exceeds the funding provided by the government – indeed the shortfall increases each year.

All other offices involved in addressing accessibility issues – Facilities and Services, Capital Projects, the Office of Teaching and Learning, Health and Wellbeing Programs and Services, Student Affairs, Information Commons, to name but a few – do so as part of their normal university responsibilities. For some offices, for example, Health and Wellbeing, a significant portion of the work is focused on accessibility and accommodation. This past year we estimate that \$370,000 was required to cover staff costs and special project needs related to accommodation, broadly defined, for faculty and staff.

It is more difficult to identify costs associated with Built Environment issues. Planning for new buildings in accordance with Universal Design Principles and retrofitting buildings at the time of renovations are costs that are simply built into project budgets.

All initiatives planned for 2006-07 have been reviewed by the relevant Unit Heads and will be funded as part of the normal ongoing operations of those units.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Plan is presented to the Business Board for information.