



# University of Toronto

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OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

TO: University Affairs Board

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DATE: September 8, 2004 for 28

AGENDA ITEM: 7

## **ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

### **Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities**

## **JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The University Affairs Board is responsible for “equity issues and initiatives” (Terms of Reference, section 5).

## **PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

Governing Council approved the first annual University of Toronto Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan 2003-2004, on October 30, 2004. One of the initiatives identified in the Plan was to review the Services to Disabled Persons Policy (1987).

## **HIGHLIGHTS:**

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), received Royal Assent in December 2001. The purpose of the Act is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that preclude their full participation in society. 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 accessibility plans that are intended to address existing barriers and prevent new barriers from being established.

As one of the initiatives identified in the University's 2003-2004 Accessibility Plan, the Services to Disabled Person Policy (1987) was reviewed and revised as the Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities.

The Services to Disabled Persons Policy (1987) is a policy that outlines the purpose and activities of a specific office that no longer exists at the University. According to the policy, this office provided information, education and counseling, assisted with accommodation measures, coordinated volunteers to work with persons with disabilities and encouraged increased accessibility. By contrast, the new Statement of Commitment outlines a broad vision of the university community for the benefit of all members. It sets out some of the efforts that the University will make with respect to persons with disabilities in order to realize this vision, and also identifies various members of the University community whose participation would assist in creating the envisioned community. Some efforts that the University commits to making include those directed at accommodating disabilities and addressing barriers, as well as providing information to all. In sum, whereas the former policy was limited to outlining the services provided by a particular office to persons with disabilities, the new Statement is a broad commitment by the University to the entire University community.

Consultation with regards to the development of the Statement of Commitment was far reaching. In addition to the forty members of the Accessibility Planning Committee (who represent a wide range of stakeholders and constituencies in the University including unions, faculty, alumnae and people with disabilities), the draft policy was sent for comment to student Governors, leaders of SAC, APUS, and the GSU.

**FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:**

N/A (NB: Any Financial and/or Planning Implications will be considered as part of the annual ODA Accessibility Plan.)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the proposed Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities be approved, replacing the Services to Disabled Persons Policy approved by the Committee on Campus and Community Affairs on December 9, 1987.

## Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities

It is the University's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. The University will work to eliminate or minimize the adverse effects of barriers, including physical, environmental, attitudinal, communication and technological barriers, that may prevent the full participation of individuals with disabilities in the University community. The University will provide the members of its community with opportunities for education and access to information regarding disability and the University's policies on disability.

At the same time, the University will endeavour to protect the individuals' privacy, confidentiality and autonomy.

The University re-affirms that all individuals are expected to satisfy the essential requirements of their program of studies or employment, while recognizing that students and employees with disabilities may require reasonable accommodations to enable them to do so. The University is, as always, committed to preserving academic freedom and its high level of academic standards.

The achievement of the University's goal depends on the participation of each and every member of the University community, including students, faculty, staff and alumni, as well as their respective representative organizations. Each of these parties has a role in creating an equitable and inclusive environment, as well as in the accommodation process and the identification, removal, and/or reduction of barriers. The consultative relationship among the members of the University community is based upon a shared desire for an open, supportive learning and working environment, and a shared respect for individual rights and dignity.

In working toward its goals under this Statement, the University is committed to acting conscientiously and in keeping with its own policies and existing legislation related to disability. These include:

- University of Toronto policy on *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy*
- University of Toronto policy on *Employment Equity*
- University of Toronto *Statement on Human Rights*  
University of Toronto *Statement of Institutional Purpose*

- University of Toronto *Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment*
- University of Toronto procedural guidelines for the accommodation of students, staff and faculty with disabilities
- Ontario *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*
- Ontario *Human rights Code*

For ease of reference, the statutory definition of the term “disability” is appended to this Statement. The application of this definition in a larger context will be addressed in procedural guidelines.

## Appendix

The term “disability” is defined as follows in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19, as amended from time to time.

- (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 co-ordination, 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 a 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*.