



# University of Toronto

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OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUITY

TO: University Affairs Board

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AGENDA ITEM: 6

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

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

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The plan is being recommended for approval to 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. (With the agreement of the Planning and Budget Committee, the proposed plan will proceed to the Academic Board, whence to the Governing Council.)

The plan is presented to the University Affairs Board for information because of its responsibility for “equity issues and initiatives” (Terms of Reference, section 5). .

**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 is submitting an Accessibility Plan as required by the Ontarians with Disability 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 Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) received Royal Assent in June, 2005; however, the planning requirements of the ODA, 2001 are still applicable until they have been replaced by standards in the new act.)

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

The Accessibility Planning Committee 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.

Every one of the fifty-seven initiatives identified in the 2005-2006 Plan was responded to and/or acted on in the past year. The Plan of 2006-2007 describes the work that was accomplished in each of these initiatives and demonstrates the breadth of commitment 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; various undertakings by Graduate House to address the barriers facing graduate students with disabilities; the approval by Governing Council of a revised *Policy on Student Housing* which addresses the requirements of the ODA; the completion of a Barrier Free Design Standards checklist by the Capital Projects Department; 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 for the majority of its chemicals.

Twenty-two new initiatives are included to be addressed in the forthcoming year along with thirteen “next steps”. A highlight of the 2006-07 Plan is the regrouping of initiatives, both new and “next steps”, 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 Community 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:**

As costs to implement initiatives have been previously allocated, have been designated within the budget of specific units, and/or include the reallocation of employee’s time, no new resources are required for the 2006-2007 Accessibility Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

For information