



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

2007 – 2008 Status Report and Update of the City of Toronto Accessibility Plan

Date:	August 14, 2007
To:	Executive Committee
From:	Shirley Hoy, City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This Status Report provides an update on the City’s 2007 – 2008 Accessibility Plan, a requirement of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA, 2001). It recommends that the 2007 – 2008 Status Report and Update on the City’s Accessibility Plan be filed with the Ontario Accessibility Directorate and be forwarded to the City’s Disability Issues Committee for information.

The Accessibility Plan supports and strengthens the City’s commitment to respond to the needs of people with disabilities in its multiple roles as employer, service provider, grants provider, and purchaser of goods and services.

The Plan commits the City to review, identify and remove barriers to access in services, policies and programs with the goal of achieving equality of access, opportunities and outcomes for all members of Toronto’s diverse communities. The barriers cited in the Plan include those which are found in the environment – physical and architectural, communication and technological barriers, as well as those which are attitudinal and systemic in nature.

The City has continued to make steady progress in making city facilities, programs, information and services more accessible and in providing a more accessible workplace. Divisions have laid the groundwork for future accessibility enhancements as outlined in the ODA and also to meet the accessibility targets of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. this Status Report and update on new initiatives be approved and submitted to the Ontario Accessibility Directorate as the 2007 - 2008 City of Toronto Accessibility Plan;
2. City Council request the Government of Ontario give consideration to providing funding as more accessibility standards and regulations are established; and
3. this Status Report be forwarded to the City's Disability Issues Committee for information.

Financial Impact

There is no direct financial impact as a result of the recommendations in this report.

Equity Statement

The City's Accessibility Plan highlights the City's commitment and progressive work to identify, remove and prevent barriers to access in services, policies and programs for people with disabilities and in making the transition to meet provincial targets.

DECISION HISTORY

The City filed its first Accessibility Plan in 2003, under the ODA, with updates provided in October 2004 and in June 2006. In May 2004, Toronto City Council included the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines as a component of the City's Accessibility Plan to address accessibility standards for facilities and the built environment.

In May 2006, City Council adopted a Web Accessibility Statement which commits the City of Toronto to improve the readability and accessibility of its websites and to correct or remove existing barriers that impede access to information. The City's web accessibility protocol will have direct links to future City initiatives including the 3-1-1 project and Council's Meeting Management project where accessibility is a key feature.

On June 13, 2005 the Government of Ontario passed additional accessibility legislation, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) which differs significantly from the ODA in its requirements and coverage. The AODA requires the public and private sectors to jointly develop standards to be achieved in stages of 5 years or less, leading to a fully accessible Ontario in 20 years.

In July 2007, the Ontario Accessibility Directorate filed its first standard for Customer Service which takes effect on January 1, 2008 with compliance by 2010 for designated public sector organizations and 2012 for other providers of goods and services. There will be further accessibility standards in the areas of Transportation, Information & Communications, Built Environment and Employment.

Until the ODA legislation is repealed, the legal obligations of public sector organizations under the ODA continue in developing annual accessibility plans and making them available to the public.

<http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/accessibilityplan/index.htm>

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2004/agendas/council/cc040928/pof7rpt/cl038.pdf>

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060627/pof5rpt/cl009.pdf>

http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/accessibility_design_guidelines.htm

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_regs_r07429_e.htm

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Each year, the City of Toronto reviews its progress on accessibility initiatives arising out of previous Accessibility Plans and addresses issues identified by the community, through its Disability Issues Committee. The City's 2007 - 2008 Plan identifies priorities and initiatives which focus on information accessibility, employment accommodation, life safety and service access.

In its goal to become barrier free, the City has made many accessibility improvements and will build on these achievements as both the private and public sectors prepare to comply with accessibility standards set under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

COMMENTS

Details of the City of Toronto's 2007 – 2008 Accessibility Plan are provided in Appendix 1. City divisions have identified a number of priorities and initiatives for which implementation has already begun, is ongoing or will take place in the following year based on the availability of resources.

For the period 2007 -2008, the City will continue to address accessibility issues by:

- a) Providing timely and equitable and access to City services and programs, including public meetings and consultations.
- b) Addressing information barriers (outreach strategies; City website; email; templates/forms).
- c) Improving physical accessibility of City facilities, parks, playgrounds, natural areas and buildings.
- d) Conducting accessibility audits and developing implementation strategies.

Staff report for action on the 2007 – 2008 Status Report and Update of the City of Toronto Accessibility Plan

- e) Providing employment accommodation, identifying gaps and promoting inclusion.
- f) Continuing to provide diversity training and awareness.
- g) Updating life safety measures eg. fire/emergency systems and signals
- h) Including barrier free/accessibility considerations in purchasing, policy and decision-making processes (for example: Accessibility standards and definitions in technology RFPs).

City initiatives planned for 2008 and beyond will continue and further reports on implementation will be addressed in future accessibility plans, incorporating accessibility standards developed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

CONCLUSION

The City of Toronto's 2007 – 2008 Accessibility Plan provides a framework for continuing its progressive work in addressing accessibility. The Plan allows the City to meet its legal obligations and to further its goal of becoming a barrier free city.

CONTACTS

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SIGNATURE

Shirley Hoy, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 – City of Toronto Divisional Accessibility Plans:
2007 -2008 Status Report and Update of the
City of Toronto Accessibility Plan