

# 2008 / 2009 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

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## *Forward*

The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to improve opportunities and accessibility for persons with disabilities, thus guaranteeing their full participation in society. With the goal to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.<sup>1</sup>

The AODA requires every college in Ontario to prepare an Annual Accessibility Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan). The Plan addresses a broad range of accessibility issues, taking into account the full definition of disability under the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The purpose of the Plan is to educate and assist Georgian College staff in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodations, and employment at the College. The College must consult with people who have experienced barriers at the College during the preparation of this Plan and make the Plan public.

The Customer Service (CS) Standard was the first AODA standard to be developed. The CS Standard became law January 1, 2008. Georgian College must implement these standards by January 1, 2010 in order to comply with the requirements set out in this standard.<sup>2</sup>

The Transportation Standards Development Committee (T-SDC) is in the final stages of developing the Transportation Standards. Once the Transportation Standards are approved by the Minister of Community and Social Services, they become law. Once law, the College must implement Transportation Standards by the dates specified.

The Information and Communications Standards Committee has developed initial proposed standards which are currently undergoing public review. Implementation is anticipated by December 31, 2011.

Georgian College will focus on these priorities over the next two years. In the meantime the College must adhere to the accessibility standards outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Advisory Committee will continue to monitor and update Senior Administration on new standards as they are developed.

As Georgian College strives to be recognized provincially, nationally and internationally as a leader in postsecondary education, the College will continue to be responsive to the needs of all students, staff and visitors.

*"When a person is treated in a fair and equal manner, there is no disability and the person does not feel disabled." (Orto and Power, 2007, pg. 9)*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_05a11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm) Retrieved October 8, 2008

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws\\_src\\_regs\\_r07429\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_regs_r07429_e.htm) Retrieved April 29, 2008

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## *Executive Summary*

Georgian College has three main campuses and four regional campuses located throughout Central Ontario. The objective of Georgian College's Accessibility Plan is to implement and enforce accessibility standards to achieve universal accessibility to the College's goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, programs and policies on or before January 1, 2025.

Recently, colour contrasting paint on stair nosings has been added to many exterior stairs; accessibility requirements for Barrie campus's Building A expansion have been shared with Physical Resources; two on-line Customer Service Staff training applications have been reviewed; Owen Sound has a new Centre for Access office and a lab; a sidewalk from bus stop to main entrance has been constructed at Owen Sound; Owen Sound's main entrance to has been reconstructed; Centre for Access and Disability Services on the Midland, Collingwood, Muskoka (Bracebridge) and Orangeville campuses have been improved.

Georgian College will participate in a joint venture sponsored by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and Colleges' Ontario to develop and implement an on-line customer service training application. The College will also explore the viability of utilizing a Geographic Information System to inventory barriers to accessibility.

Ongoing presentations to senior staff and employee groups to obtain input and feedback will be provided as the plan evolves and will help to prioritize the removal of barriers.

Copies of the Accessibility Plan will be made available through the Marketing and Communications Department, all Campus Connections, on the College's web site, and through regular updates on the College Capsule. The Plan will be made available in alternative formats, such as: CD, tapes, in large print, or in Braille, upon request.

## Objectives of the Plan

The objective of Georgian College's Accessibility Plan is to implement and enforce accessibility standards to achieve universal accessibility to the College's goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, programs and policies on or before January 1, 2025.

## Commitment to Accessibility Planning

Georgian College is committed to continually improving access to all College premises, facilities, information, programs and services which span across three main campuses and four regional campuses located throughout Central Ontario, Canada.

*"Sometimes a disability itself may handicap a person, as when a person with one arm is handicapped in playing the violin. However, when the limitation is environmental, as in the case of attitudinal, legal, and architectural barriers, the disability is not handicapping—the environmental factor is. This distinction is important because the environment is frequently overlooked as a major source of limitation, even when it is far more limiting than the disability. Thus, prejudice handicaps people by denying access to opportunities; inaccessible buildings surrounded by steps and curbs handicap people who require the use of a ramp." (American Psychological Association, 1992)*

The aim of Georgian's annual Accessibility Plan is to identify, remove and prevent barriers to inclusion and establish priorities for barrier removal.

## Recent Initiatives

- Colour contrasting paint on stair nosings in courtyard between Library Commons, K and B Building, Barrie
- New Centre for Access office / lab, Owen Sound
- New sidewalk from bus stop to main entrance, Owen Sound
- Replace interlock brick with concrete at main entrance, Owen Sound
- Consultation with Physical Resources to review new architectural plan – Building A expansion, Barrie. Accessibility requirements for the expansion have been shared with Physical Resources - Barrie
- Reviewed two workshop formats and two on-line customer service staff training applications
- Initial planning for Centre for Access and Disability Services Midland and Muskoka (Bracebridge) campuses

## Preventing New Barriers

Georgian strives to make all campuses, policies, procedures and programming accessible to everyone. Through the annual auditing process, barriers to accessibility will be inventoried for elimination. Through education, rigorous planning procedures, awareness and sensitivity training, we will continue to focus on eliminating barriers.

Once the Plan has been adopted, any expansion /renovation or new construction, changes to policy, procedures or programming will adhere to the practice of inclusion.

## *New Initiatives*

In 2008 / 2009 Georgian College will participate in a joint venture sponsored by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and Colleges' Ontario to develop and implement an on-line customer service training application. This training will improve communication between the College and customers facing barriers and, train staff responsible for developing Georgian's customer service policies, practices and procedures in the provision of accessible customer service.

An updated needs analysis will be developed to guide the development of interview schedules, surveys and other data-gathering and all areas will be addressed( i.e., physical, architectural, communication, information, attitudinal, technological, policy and practice).

For the 2008 / 2009 reporting period Georgian College will investigate the viability of utilizing a Geographic Information System (GIS) for inventorying barriers to accessibility. With the development of a GIS, all stakeholders can update the inventory of barriers and their removal status. A GIS will allow data to be easily shared between departments and is scalable to include other aspects of the College operations such as, way finding kiosks, electrical and plumbing diagrams, etc. Creating a Geographic Information System will enable stakeholders to view barriers, aid in planning for the removal of the barrier and report on the status of the barrier.<sup>3</sup>

## *Barrier Identification Methodologies*

- A complete review of laws and standards will be undertaken in 2008 / 2009.
- A team will be assembled to conduct a needs analysis. This needs analysis will be used to guide the development of interview schedules, surveys, focus groups and other data-gathering. All areas will be addressed (i.e., physical, architectural, communication, information, attitudinal, technological, policy and practice).
  - Individual students and staff will be invited to respond and contribute their suggestions in the area of accessibility. In gathering the data, every effort will be made to encourage participation from people who have experienced barriers. This will include extensive communication of the plan and widespread invitations for input and feedback.
  - While the primary purpose of the survey is to gather data for informed decision-making, it is expected that it will also serve to raise the awareness of respondents regarding the question of accessibility and accessibility planning within the Georgian community.
- Data will be gathered through document analysis (e.g. review of policies).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gis.com/whatisgis/index.html> Retrieved October 7, 2008

## *Barriers Identified*

Upon completion of the interviews, focus groups and surveys, all campuses will be audited for barriers to accessibility. Once identified and inventoried, strategies for removal of these barriers will be developed.

The Accessibility Coordinator will be reporting on the gaps between what presently is in place at Georgian and where the College should be in the next five to ten years in order to achieve universal accessibility to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, programs and policies on or before January 1, 2025. From this gap analysis the Senior Management will be able to develop short term (annual) and long-term plans to address barrier removal.

## *Review and Monitoring Process*

Within the needs analysis a review and monitoring procedure will be developed (the process that would benefit most from a GIS). As new standards are developed they will be included in the needs analysis and audit procedure. Quarterly stakeholder meetings will be scheduled to review and update the barrier inventory and status. With the development of a GIS all stakeholders can update the inventory of barriers and their removal status from their desktop computers, thus negating the need for quarterly meetings.

## *Communication of the Plan*

- Regular updates to senior staff will provide input and feedback as the Plan evolves.
- Presentation to employee groups will provide information regarding the Plan and help the working group to prioritize the removal of barriers.
- Copies of the Accessibility Plan will be made available through the Marketing and Communications Department, all Georgian College campuses through Campus Connections, on the College's web site, and through regular updates on the College Capsule. The Plan will be made available in alternative formats, such as: CD, tapes, in large print, or in Braille, upon request.

## Appendix 1– Barriers

Under the AODA, ‘barrier’ means anything that prevents a person with a disability from participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. The barriers may be physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological or a barrier to policies, procedures or practices.

Barrier Type	Example
Physical strength and mobility	A door knob that cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Typefaces too small to be read by a person with low-vision.
Communicational	A professor who talks loudly when addressing a deaf student.
Attitudinal	A receptionist who ignores a customer in a wheelchair.
Technological	A paper tray on a laser printer that requires two strong hands to open.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

## *Appendix 2 – Definition for disability under the AODA*

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.

A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.

A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.

A mental disorder, or an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/05a11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/05a11_e.htm) retrieved May 30, 2006

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