

**Brock Barrier Free Working Group
Meeting May 26th 2008**

Present:

Marie Belliveau, Margaret Sanderson, Shelley Stewart, Krystine Donato, Sarah Marshall, Jack Miller, Judith Brooder, Lee Ann Cayer, Beverley Boudreau, Marie Cutler, Mary Jayne Waszynski, Amy Graham

Guests: Jenn Davis, Susan Mifsud, David Ditor,

Interpreter: Roman Pizzacalla

Absent: Scott Walker, Jeff Boggs, Elizabeth Walker, Liz Kaethler

- 1. Welcome and review of agenda**
- 2. Draft Accommodation of Employees with Disabilities Policy – Susan Mifsud, Associate Director, Human Resources**

Susan presented draft document. Previous policy is old therefore this is a revision rather than a new policy. The document will go through appropriate channels for review and feedback before going to Senate. Asked those who had time to review prior to this meeting for comments, and for those who needed time for further review to forward comments by e-mail to Susan.

Comments/Questions:

Q. From an employee perspective, it is not clear who the employee should contact if requires accommodation.

Susan. Acknowledged this.

COMMENTS: Concern that departments are expected to carry the costs of accommodation. Employees sometimes feel responsible for debt load on their department. If costs do fall to departments, this may discourage departments from hiring persons with a disability.

Susan. It has been suggested since 1994 that a central pool of funds be set up to cover the cost of employee accommodation, but this is not in place yet. This remains on the agenda for HR. The costs are usually worked out internally, including both centrally and globally, co-funded.

COMMENTS: The issue of the provision of accommodations outside of the typical “office setting” remains an issue. E.g. if an employee is representing the university in their official capacity at a special event etc is not addressed within the policy.

COMMENTS: The employment standards under the AODA may clarify some of these issues also.

COMMENTS: Policy does not indicate guidelines in terms of documentation that an employee is required to submit. This may be an issue if not clarified.

Susan. Acknowledged this and appreciated the feedback, will take this under advisement. This is a draft policy at this date – Susan would like to see procedures developed and attached to the policy.

- 3. Dr. David Ditor – Faculty Member, Physical Education and Kinesiology
Rick Hanson Research and Run.**

Every year there are fund raising event in memory of Rick Hansen. This year there will be a fund raising event at Brock in August (probably 15th, 16, 17th). There will be teams of five, each person has to raise \$200 minimum. There will be stations with activities that each person has to complete. David would like this group to enter a team.

David can apply for 55% of the proceeds which he intends to use to build a wheelchair accessible training facility at the Lockhart Institute. There is a meeting this coming Friday and he will come back to the group to keep informed.

Comment: Sport by Ability Niagara may be a useful contact.

Item 6. Updates

Marie Cutler – Report on the Welland Accessibility Committee Accessibility Symposium.

Marie attended the symposium along with Marie Belliveau and Margaret Sanderson. Shelley Stewart also attended, as did Karen Natho from the Niagara Penguins.

Scott Weeres, Director, Standards Development and Compliance, Ontario Accessibility Directorate, spoke on the AODA – most standards committees should have finished their work by 2009.

Bob Topping, Universal Instructional Design instructor at Sheridan College presented on “How Accessibility has Changed”

Walt Balenovitch author of “Travels in a Blue Chair” spoke about his experiences in a motivational presentation.

David Lepofsky - Toronto Constitutional Lawyer and human rights (disability rights) activist spoke and presented information on recent changes to the human rights tribunal.

Margaret: Announced that door operators will be installed in eight locations on campus, including the main Tower entrance, during the time period of June 9th – June 19th.

Marie announced that after a short break, we will be gathering at the new Learning Commons entrance to meet with Scott Walker, project manager and Deb Kalvee, Associate University Librarian, to tour the space and to hear an overview of the design and utilization of the new space. Committee members have been made aware of an issue regarding security gates at the exits from the library.

Comment: Jack announced that the architects used the FADS design standards and the gates are within those standards. If changes have to be made at this point, then the delays could mean that the library will not be open by September, and the costs (of delay) could amount easily to over \$100,000.00. The library has to be open by September when students return and begin classes.

Jack suggested that this committee should look closely at those FADS standards and review and also ensure that consistent review of future projects takes place in the early planning stages.

Learning Commons Tour and Overview

Scott Roper, Project Manager presented an overview of the layout and planned utilization of the space.

During the overview several comments/questions arose from the committee members regarding accessibility concerns.

COMMENTS: A coffee bar will be located in the Southeast corner of the Commons. A high counter and bar type stools will be along the window overlooking the courtyard, additional seating will be booth type open seating/study groupings. Asked if group seating allows for use by someone using a wheelchair or scooter. **The window seating does not allow for use by someone using a mobility device.**

Scott: Group seating is moveable and there is room at the tables to wheel up.

COMMENTS: The travel path in this same area looks cramped. Could contrasting floor material be used to indicate a path of travel? Otherwise when chairs are pulled out, bags, coats etc around, this will cause obstacles and cut off a clear path of travel. If a "path" is defined by colour/texture contrast – users tend to keep this clear.

Scott: Carpet has been purchased – will note for future.

Scott: Paint colours will be contrasting. Walls white, pillars and door frames etc will be orange/brown.

Scott: South entrance/exit (off Thistle Corridor) has a welcome desk/reception area close by. There will be no gates at this exit, just antennae. Removing the gates and adding one antennae cost an additional \$2000. There will be gates at the East exit.

Comments and discussion re why the need for gates AND antennae. Marie presented information gathered from other university libraries / libraries and most do not use gates or have removed them due to accessibility issues.

Deb: Need gates to deter theft. Had 1100 books stolen from the library over past three years.

Shelley: Explained the difficulty she would have navigating through these gates. Anyone with a visual impairment would need to be oriented otherwise would have major problems. Shelley also advised on difficulties with lack of tactile cues on the floor, especially in such a large open space such as the Commons. Suggested continuing rubber flooring at entrance all the way to the reception desk. This would guide people to reception, would be good for all, but especially for those with visual impairments.

Judith: respectfully requested that the decision to install gates be reviewed. Gates are included in FADS standards for when they are necessary. If not absolutely required then installation of such would actually be creating a barrier. The ODA requires all public institutions to identify and remove barriers. We are creating new ones. Once the AODA built environment standards are completed, (should be within the next 15 months) we may have to remove them in order to comply.

Scott proceeded to accompany the committee members on a tour of the site.

Marie Cutler: A "quick" computer access area in the main travel area from the south entrance is designed as a standing area. Marie asked why there was not one lower wheelchair accessible station. Scott explained that these were just quick

access stations and built to stand only, to deter people from sitting and spending more time at these stations. Marie felt insulted by this lack of inclusion.

Scott acknowledged the comments and was interested in all the feedback. He continued to speak with committee members on an individual basis throughout the tour.

The meeting did not officially adjourn as Scott stayed with remaining committee members past 7:30pm to continue discussion and listen to feedback.