**AccessTO Overview**

AccessTO began as an online blog consisting of reviews of accessible restaurants in Toronto. The vision of AccessTO is to have 100% of Toronto accessible to all persons.

As of November 16, 2015, the AccessTO website includes\*:

* 124 reviews of restaurants
* 37 reviews of cafes
* 47 reviews of bars and pubs
* 17 reviews of concert and live music venues
* Tips for business owners interested in learning more about accessibility standards in Ontario and what they can do to make their business more accessible.

Since its inception, the AccessTO initiative has expanded to include multiple components outside of the blog including collaborative educational activities and community development initiatives. An age-friendly perspective has recently been introduced that includes recognition of the barriers faced by senior citizens.

AccessTO employs a collaborative model of accessibility audits where people with lived experience of disability (including younger and older adults) are paired with either an occupational therapist or physical therapist. This adds to the reliability of the audit results and offers skill development for both the professionals and disabled persons, and creates occupational opportunities for both professionals and disabled persons who are interested in accessibility audits and consultations. Examples of restaurant reviews featuring collaborative audits completed by a practicing or student occupational therapist and a person with lived experience of disability can be viewed at: <http://accessto.ca/2015/10/27/globe-bistro/> and <http://accessto.ca/2015/11/11/jawny-bakers/>

## **AccessTO Advisory Board**

AccessTO activities have oversight from an advisory board made up of: founder and physiotherapist, Silvia Guido; faculty members of the Department of Occupational Sciences and Occupational Therapy at the University of Toronto (Barry Trentham, Jill Stier, Andrea Duncan); accessibility consultant and educator, Fran Odette; disability rights lawyer, Mike Dytyniak; Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) representative; occupational therapists and auditors Lydia Beck and Laura Kalef; age-friendly cities consultant and member of Toronto Council on Aging, Lillian Wells. Plans are underway to establish non-profit status for AccessTO. The Advisory Board oversees the development of the strategic priorities outlined below.

## ***Education***

AccessTO activities have been integrated into the Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Master’s program curriculum at the University of Toronto. The collaborative audit approach also offers learning opportunities for both disabled persons and therapists.

Plans for 2016 include the design of educational/consultation materials for restaurant owners and consultants regarding provincial and municipal standards surrounding accessibility and tips for creating accessible spaces.

***Stakeholder Engagement and Community Development***

A network of stakeholders is currently being established to provide a voice for key groups in the activities of AccessTO. Stakeholders will represent persons with lived experience of physical disability, occupational health professionals, city planners, and restaurant owners and associations.

## ***Research and Evaluation***

Research is underway to explore the factors that influence engagement with the AccessTO website among disable persons, accessibility advocates, restaurant owners or association members, and city officials. Future research will explore the experience of doing collaborative audits by those who contribute to the blog and those who use the blog; and to evaluate the impact of AccessTO on targeted audience members and beyond.

## ***Funding***

The identification and application of potential start up grants are currently in progress. Non-profit status applications are underway.

## ***Growth & Marketing***

The design, execution and evaluation of a marketing plan is in progress. The goals of marketing are to increase traffic to the AccessTO website and to widen the targeted audience.

**\*** Please note that there is some overlap in the number of reviews within each venue category. Some of the venues have also closed since their review – those that are closed are indicated on the website.