

French Language Services Policy Review

Presented To:	Finance and Administration Committee
Meeting Date:	December 12, 2023
Type:	Managers' Reports
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Recommended by:	Chief Administrative Officer

Report Summary

This report provides a recommendation regarding the French Language Services Policy and information on next steps.

Resolution

THAT the City Council directs staff to undertake a second phase of engagement with Members of Council, staff, the community and partners on the revised French Services Policy;

AND that a final policy and associated action plan be presented to City Council by the end of April 2024 as outlined in the report entitled “French Language Services Policy Review” presented by the Chief Administrative Officer at the Finance and Administration Committee meeting on December 12, 2023.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This report aligns with the *Asset Management and Service Excellence* and *Create a Healthier and More Vibrant Community* priorities of the City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan. There is no direct alignment with the Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP).

Financial Implications

Implementation of the engagement plan will require 50 hours of staff time. Costs are estimated to be \$1,500 and include advertising and translations. All costs associated with implementing the engagement plan will be funded within existing Communications and Community Engagement operating budgets.

Background

As directed by Council in April 2022, a review of the French Language Services Policy is underway. This policy was originally adopted in 2001 as a commitment to offer services and communications in both official languages of Canada.

This report provides a draft revised policy (Appendix A), results of engagement (Appendix B and C), supporting information and next steps in response to Resolution **CC2022-88**:

WHEREAS the City of Greater Sudbury is committed to offering services in French and English to meet community needs;

AND WHEREAS the City of Greater Sudbury 's French-Language Service Policy was developed and approved by City Council 22 years ago and its procedures for the delivery of the French Services do not meet modern day needs or community expectations;

AND WHEREAS Council would like staff to review the existing French-Language Services policy and assess any required changes to modernize the policy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Greater Sudbury directs the Director of Communications and Community Engagement to conduct a review of the French-Language Services Policy and present a report to Council in the second quarter of 2023, which includes an analysis of the relevance of the current policy, and recommendations on potential changes with supporting data.

Summary and Context: Draft Revised Policy

The current French Language Services policy is focused on written communications and restricts how these services are delivered. It does not consider current community needs and demographics, advancements in technology, or programming and cultural elements. It limits staff's capacity to enhance and improve these services on a continuous basis.

The draft policy included in Appendix A of this report is an update of the City's inaugural 2001 French Language Services policy and is intended to modernize and improve French services by considering a customer service-focused approach, current community needs, demographics and technology advancements. It was amended based on a review of similar policies, customer service data, and consultation with staff, partners, stakeholders and residents to better understand opportunities, challenges and successes of the current policy. Few other municipalities have French services policies, however, those that do, such as Moncton, New Brunswick, and the City of Ottawa, have some common elements: active offer, bilingual communications and front-line service, and staff development and training, all of which are reflected in the draft policy.

The revised policy guides active and meaningful services in French, in recognition of French as one of Canada's official languages and of the prevalence of French-speaking and bilingual residents in our community.

The draft policy applies overarching principles to guide the delivery of French services, complemented by internal guidelines, policies and procedures. These principles ensure the policy is implemented without restricting opportunities for continuous improvement. It will be accompanied by a detailed action plan.

The guiding principles in the draft policy are as follows:

Principle 1: We actively offer French services.

Principle 2: We understand the value of engaging with French-speaking residents.

Principle 3: We demonstrate responsiveness and progressive change related to French services.

Principle 4: We actively build the organization's capacity to serve residents in both of Canada's official languages.

While there are other languages and cultures reflected in the residents of Greater Sudbury, French is the most predominant alternative to English, especially when considering bilingual residents. Additionally, a significant portion of the population identifies as Francophone, further emphasizing the importance of active offer.

Summary of Engagement

Community and Partners

From September 22, 2023, to October 20, 2023, Residents had the opportunity to participate in a survey via the Over to You engagement portal. Paper surveys were available at Citizen Service Centres and the One Stop Services counter at Tom Davies Square. Residents who could not access surveys online or in person had the option to call 311.

Engagement opportunities were shared through:

- Public Service Announcements
- Website
- Social media channels
- Over to You engagement platform
- Community partner and stakeholder networks
- At City facilities
- Through 311 Services customer interactions

Social Media Engagement

Information on the engagement opportunity was shared on social media platforms. During that time 85 residents engaged with content on Facebook, 15 engaged with content on Instagram and 41 engaged with content on Twitter by either liking or commenting. Social media paid advertising reached 1,535 users on Facebook, 1,271 on Instagram and 1,403 on Twitter.

What We Heard

The following information is a summary of the engagement reports. The findings are a sample of the opinions taken from those who willingly participated, collected from both the English and French surveys. Appendix B includes detailed reports.

- Total visits: 632
- Engaged visitors (participated in survey): 243
- Aware (visited at least one page): 581
- Informed (engaged with content or visited multiple pages): 308

Key Findings

- Demographics:
 - 38 per cent of respondent's self-identify as Francophone.
 - 30 per cent of respondent's self-identify as Anglophone.
 - 25 per cent of respondent's self-identify as Bilingual.
 - 5 per cent of respondent's self-identify as other.
 - 0.5 per cent of respondent's self-identify as Francophile.
- 51 per cent of residents who completed the survey request service in French with the City of Greater Sudbury

- The services respondents said were most accessed or corresponded with in French are:
 - 311 Services (26 per cent)
 - Leisure Services (25 per cent)
 - Citizen Services Centres (23 per cent)
 - Clerks services (17 per cent)
 - Tax Services (12 per cent)
 - Environmental Services (10 per cent)
 - Children Services (9 per cent)
 - Emergency Services (9 per cent)
 - Communications and Community Engagement (8 per cent)
 - Transit (7 per cent)
 - Building Services (7 per cent)
 - Long-Term Care (7 per cent)
 - Legal Services (6 per cent)
 - Water and Wastewater Services (6 per cent)
 - By-Law and Corporate Security (5 per cent)
 - Mayor's Office (5 per cent)
 - Planning and Development (4 per cent)
 - Social Services/Housing Services (3 per cent)
 - Economic Development (2 per cent)
 - Environmental Initiatives (2 per cent)

Staff Survey

From September 22 to October 20, 2023, 153 staff participate in a voluntary survey. A summary can be found below, and complete results can be found in Appendix C.

- 62 per cent of staff who responded to the survey speak French. Of those, 72 per cent describe their French language skills as competent or very competent.
- 71 per cent of staff feel comfortable being identified as French speaking.
- 50 per cent of staff would be interested in courses to improve their French language skills.
- 14 per cent of staff indicated they receive daily request for service in French, while 27 per cent indicated they never receive a request.

Supporting Data

Community

Statistics show that approximately 37 per cent of residents are bilingual (French and English), and 22 percent list French as their mother tongue (2021 Census of Canada).

- Population of French Mother Tongue as a percentage by former municipalities (2021 Census of Canada)
 - Capreol and Northeast Townships: 18 per cent
 - Southeast Township: 19 per cent
 - Nickel Centre: 20 per cent
 - Onaping Falls: 21 per cent
 - Rayside-Balfour: 45 per cent
 - Sudbury: 16 per cent
 - Valley East: 37 per cent
 - Walden: 8 per cent

- Schools and enrollment in the City of Greater Sudbury for 2021/2022 (Note: this does not account for immersion programs in English schools)
 - English schools: 60
 - French schools: 33
 - Student enrollment: 70 per cent in English school and 30 per cent in French schools

City Services

The information below provides information on French Services at the City of Greater Sudbury.

- English and French City of Greater Sudbury website:
 - Pageviews and visitors during the highest traffic week in 2022: 131,735 pageviews and 40,739 visitors English (April 5 to 10, 2022); 2,766 pageviews and 1,930 visitors French (July 18 to 24, 2022).
 - Top three most visited French webpages in 2022: *Nouvelles et avis au public* with 16,866 pageviews, *Page d'accueil* with 8,030 pageviews and *Les cyanobactéries (ou algues bleu-vert)* with 7,438 pageviews.
- Over to You engagement portal:
 - Over to you has 4,136 English and 70 French participants registered.
 - Total visits since the site was created in 2018: 81.7K English, 2,500 French.
 - Most visitors on a single day: 3,000 English, 53 French.
- Front-line customer service:
 - Less than 2 per cent of calls received by 311 are French.
 - Approximately 1.5 per cent of 311 chat requests are French.
 - Less than 0.5 per cent of emails received by 311 are French.
 - All 311 customer service representatives, as well as the Manager of 311 and Customer Service are designated bilingual positions.
 - Of the six Citizen Service Centres, Chelmsford and Val Caron are designated as official bilingual locations based on the higher percentage of French-speaking residents.
 - The three positions at the One Stop Services counter located at Tom Davies Square are designated bilingual.
- Recreation programming:
 - Howard Armstrong Recreation Centre offers French swimming lessons.
 - French summer playground camps are offered at three locations: Chelmsford, Elmview and Ridgecrest. All spaces during summer 2023 were filled.

Other French Services City Initiatives

Although the current policy focuses on communications, the City continues to enhance French services and support francophone community initiatives. A few success stories are shared below, however, many other examples exist across the organization.

Customer-focus: The recent transfer of day-to-day oversight for French services from Communications to Customer Service and 311 has resulted in a more customer-focused approach. In addition, most complaints related to French are service related. The Manager of Customer Service and 311 was designated a mandatory bilingual position during the most recent hiring.

Long-term Care (Pioneer Manor): Pioneer Manor is a champion of enhanced French services, in recognition of the high-number of French-speaking residents at the Home. A few examples are shared below:

- Partnerships with French high schools to foster a sense of pride and connection among younger and older generations, while preserving and promoting French culture.
- Revamped communications tools and incorporated French into activities such as resident bingo.
- Focus on recruitment from French post-secondary programs to recruit more French-speaking staff.

Annual Franco-Ontarien flag-raising: The City of Greater Sudbury permanently raises the Franco-Ontarien flag at a different municipal facility every year during Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day celebrations. A long-standing partnership with the Association canadienne française de l'Ontario du grand Sudbury, beyond its symbolic importance, the flag-raising strengthens community partnerships and demonstrates our commitment to French services. A few recent locations where permanent flags have been installed include Pioneer Manor, Howard Armstrong Recreation Centre, James Jerome Sports Complex and the renovated courtyard at Tom Davies Square.

Process changes: The City of Greater Sudbury is continuously enhancing processes to enhance French Services. A few examples are below:

- Incorporated French requirements in requests for proposals, for example construction projects (signage) and public-facing technology.
- Change in recruitment process to post all jobs in French.
- Use of translation software to ensure French public communications for after hours and emergencies.
- Implemented bilingual interfaces for new public-facing technology projects such as recreation booking software, 311 Services portal, GIS map portal, Over to You engagement portal and other.

Translation Services

Contracted translation services are highly used on a day-to-day basis throughout the organization. While these services were offered in-house in the past, because of the volume most translation was still completed by vendors. With the number of channels requiring translated materials increasing, such as websites and social media, and the importance of timeliness in modern communications it was no longer financially and operationally practical to perform this work in house.

For context, the municipality spends an average of \$175,000 a year on translation services (financial data using only top three vendors). At a cost of 27 cents per word, this means we translate approximately 648,000 words in a year. With 252 working days in a year, not accounting for holidays, vacation and sick time, an in-house certified translator would need to translate approximately 2,572 words per day to achieve service levels. A translator can perform an average of 1,500 to 2,000 words per day. To complete this work, we would require a minimum of two full-time certified translator staff, at a cost of more than \$200,000, including salaries and benefits. This does not consider vacation and absences. Additionally, the volume of work fluctuates daily, and many projects require more technical translation expertise. Even with two full-time staff, it is likely that contracted services would still be required to fulfill service needs.

It is important to note that advances in technology are allowing the organization to enhance use of translation software, which will result in lower costs to contracted services and more timely service. The use of these technologies is being explored and offer lower cost opportunities to serve residents who speak languages other than French and English or who have accessibility needs.

Next Steps

To ensure a meaningful engagement process related to French Services, the draft policy will be presented back to the public, partners and employees for comment. Members of Council will also have the opportunity to discuss their feedback.

Based on the results of the second round of engagement, further changes to the draft policy will occur and staff will return to seek Council approval of a final French Services Policy and accompanying action plan by the end of April 2024.

Resources Cited

City of Greater Sudbury French Languages Services Policy 2001:

https://www.greatersudbury.ca/sites/sudburyen/assets/content/dept_as/documents/flspolicyeng.pdf

City of Ottawa:

[French Language Services Advisory Committee | City of Ottawa](#)

City of Moncton:

<https://moncton.ca/my-govt-work/official-languages>