

NO: R171

COUNCIL DATE: September 23, 2024

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **September 19, 2024**

FROM: **General Manager, Corporate Services**

FILE: **o625-01**

SUBJECT: **Multilingual Communications Policy Update**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Services Department recommends that Council receive this report for information.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the newly developed Multilingual Communications Policy (the “Policy”), as outlined in Appendix “I”.

## BACKGROUND

As one of the most diverse cities in Canada, the City of Surrey is committed to serving its citizens in an inclusive manner. To support this commitment, the City continuously strives to reduce barriers to accessing information and ensure that communications and public engagement efforts reach as many residents as possible.

On June 10, 2024, Council initiated the development of the Multilingual Communications Policy, recognizing the opportunity to enhance communication accessibility for Surrey’s diverse communities.

At the Regular Council Meeting on July 22, 2024, Council endorsed the Multilingual Communications Policy framework, as detailed in Corporate Report No. R151; 2024 (attached as Appendix “II”), and directed staff to proceed with developing and implementing a policy aimed at meeting translation needs and enhancing City communications and engagement with multilingual residents and individuals with limited proficiency in English.

## DISCUSSION

### Policy Overview

The Multilingual Communications Policy serves as a corporate practice that will guide the City’s translation efforts, ensuring that Surrey’s diverse population is effectively reached and engaged. This Policy supports improved governance by enhancing communication access for all residents.

The Policy will be implemented in phases, with ongoing evaluation and consideration of community feedback guiding its implementation. To start with, Policy implementation will focus on the translation of significant external communications produced by the City. Communication methods and platforms will be selected based on the intended audience and anticipated impact. This may include radio, print, social media, video, electronic, etc.

### Translation Priorities

Language translation will be prioritized for communications that are within the following information categories:

1. Critical information: City information that could impact the immediate and direct health and safety of the public, including sudden disruption of critical City services;
2. Major community initiatives: Initiatives that have a high impact on citizens city-wide;
3. Strategic City priorities: significant council initiatives, and;
4. Discretionary or special purpose initiatives: Initiatives that have a high impact on citizens within a specific community or target audience.

### Translation Criteria

Translation will be guided by the following principles and procedures:

1. The City will employ a data informed approach to language translation by utilizing the latest Canadian Census information to guide its decision-making;
2. Translation may occur in languages that are Spoken Most Often at Home by 5% or more of Surrey residents across the entire City, or within a particular town centre, based on current census data;
3. All translated materials must accurately convey the meaning and intent of the original message;
4. Translated materials must consider cultural nuances and context to prevent misunderstandings;
5. The City will utilize 3rd Parties to perform language translation services and in-house translators with expertise in the subject matter;
6. The translation process will include a multi-step review process for all translations:
  - Initial translation – Completed by a qualified translator
  - Secondary review – Conducted by a secondary translator or subject matter expert
  - Final approval – the Director, Communications and Engagement will provide the final approval prior to public release;
7. Methods of communication will focus on the broadest reach and highest impact and will vary depending on the individual circumstances and requirements. For example, methods of communication may include radio, video, print, social media, electronic, etc; and
8. Translation services require lead time and resources and, as such, the City will carefully consider how the Policy is applied to the numerous external communications that are produced by the City.

## CONCLUSION

Implementing a Multilingual Communications Policy represents a significant step forward in enhancing the City's capacity to engage and communicate with multilingual residents and those with limited English proficiency.

Based on the discussion above, it is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

Joey Jatinder Singh Brar  
General Manager, Corporate Services

Appendix "I": City of Surrey Corporate Practice – Multilingual Communications Policy  
Appendix "II": Corporate Report No. R151; 2024 Multilingual Communications Policy



## City of Surrey Corporate Practice

<b>Practice Name:</b>	Multilingual Communications Policy		
<b>Implemented:</b>	September 23, 2024	<b>Distributed:</b>	
<b>Updated:</b>		<b>Version:</b>	1.0
<b>Issued by:</b>	Corporate Services	<b>Approved by:</b>	General Manager, Corporate Services

### PURPOSE

As one of the most diverse cities in Canada, the City of Surrey is committed to serving its citizens in an inclusive manner that enhances understanding and connection. To support this commitment, we continuously strive to reduce barriers to accessing information and ensure that communications efforts reach as many residents as possible.

The Multilingual Communications Policy (the “Policy”) guides the City’s language translation efforts, helping to better serve and effectively communicate with Surrey’s diverse population. This Policy supports improved governance by enhancing communications access for Surrey residents.

### SCOPE

This Policy applies to language translation of external City communications. Translation will be prioritized for communications that are within the following information categories:

1. **Critical information:** City information that could impact the immediate and direct health and safety of the public, including sudden disruption of critical City services;
2. **Major community initiatives:** Initiatives that have a high impact on citizens city-wide;
3. **Strategic City priorities:** Significant council initiatives; and
4. **Discretionary or special purpose initiatives:** Initiatives that have a high impact on citizens within a specific community or target audience.

### LANGUAGE TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES

Translation will be guided by the following principles:

1. The City will employ a data informed approach to language translation by utilizing the latest Canadian Census information to guide its decision-making.
2. Translation may occur in languages that are *Spoken Most Often at Home* by 5% or more of Surrey residents across the entire City, or within a particular town centre, based on current Census data.
3. All translated materials must accurately convey the meaning and intent of the original message.
4. Translated materials should consider cultural nuances and context to prevent misunderstandings.

5. The City will utilize 3<sup>rd</sup> Parties to perform language translation services and in-house translators with expertise in the subject matter.
6. The translation process will include a multi-step review process for all translations:
  - Initial translation – completed by a qualified translator
  - Secondary review – conducted by a secondary translator or subject matter expert
  - Final approval – the Director, Communications and Engagement will provide the final approval prior to public release
7. Methods of communication will focus on the broadest reach and highest impact and will vary depending on the individual circumstances and requirements. For example, methods of communication may include radio, video, print, social media, electronic, etc.
8. Translation services require lead time and resources and, as such, the City will carefully consider how the Policy is applied to the numerous external communications that are produced by the City.

## COMPLIANCE

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director, Communications and Engagement. Updates will be made periodically, as required.



## CORPORATE REPORT

NO: R151

COUNCIL DATE: July 22, 2024

**REGULAR COUNCIL**TO: **Mayor & Council**DATE: **July 18, 2024**FROM: **General Manager, Corporate Services**FILE: **0625-01**SUBJECT: **Multilingual Communications Policy****RECOMMENDATION**

The Corporate Services Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information;
2. Endorse the Multilingual Communications Policy framework, as described in this report; and
3. Direct staff to proceed with developing and implementing a policy aimed at meeting translation needs and enhancing City communications and engagement with multilingual residents and individuals with limited proficiency in English.

**INTENT**

The intent of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Policy framework and to proceed with developing and implementing a policy to guide the City's multilingual communication practices in order to better serve and effectively communicate with Surrey's diverse population.

**BACKGROUND**

Surrey is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Canada and as such, Council and staff are committed to serving its citizens in the most inclusive manner possible. Recent census data shows that 38% of our residents speak English as a second language. As part of the City's commitment to effective governance, the City strives to reduce barriers to accessing information and ensuring that its communications and public engagement efforts reach as many residents as possible.

Recognizing this, on June 10, 2024, Council directed staff to draft a Policy to guide City communications that effectively supports reaching multilingual audiences or people with limited proficiency in English.

**DISCUSSION**

City staff conducted a review of Surrey's demographics based on the latest census data and performed a comprehensive assessment of current translation practices in other municipalities and organizations across British Columbia and Canada with similar demographics.

## Surrey Demographics

Recent census data shows that 67% of Surrey's population is from a visible minority group. Visible minority as defined by the Employment Equity Act is "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". In Surrey, the most significant visible minority groups are: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Korean, and Japanese.

In addition, the languages spoken most often at home by Surrey residents are English at 56.4%, Punjabi at 18% and Mandarin at 4.1%. The language that is most often spoken at home is a strong indicator of how individuals within that household prefer to receive information and how it is most effectively comprehended.

City staff have also developed detailed community profiles, based on census data and statistics, that show languages spoken most often at home vary by location. For example, in the Guildford community, English (62.53%), Mandarin (8.92%) and Tagalog Filipino (5.03%) represent the top three languages spoken most often at home. In the Fleetwood community, English (57.82%), Punjabi (19.31%) and Mandarin (5.23%) are among the top three.

Further details on Surrey's demographics city-wide and by community/Town Centre are shown in Appendix "I".

## Current Translation Capabilities

The City does not have a formal policy in place to guide multilingual communication practices and procedures. Informal internal practices allow for ad hoc translation requests at the discretion of senior marketing and communications staff.

The City offers free in-person and over-the-phone interpretation services in more than 170 languages, including Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese, French and many others. Online translation service on the City's website is also available through Google Translate.

The City's Interpretative Language Skills Team (ILST), comprised of City staff who speak multiple languages, provides interpretive support to City staff serving Surrey residents with limited proficiency in English, as needed.

Through the work of the City's Multicultural Media Relations Lead, City programs and services are highlighted and communicated through ethnic media, fostering understanding and engagement within Surrey's diverse communities.

A list of the City's existing communication channels, including their translation capabilities, are identified in Appendix "II".

## Review of Comparable Organizations

City staff conducted interviews with comparative Canadian municipalities and organizations to gain insights and to review their relevant policies and practices.

Several strong common themes emerged from the research findings, including:

- A formal policy is recommended to guide multilingual communication efforts;
- A formal policy provides transparency and clarity for both staff and the public on how translation decisions are made;
- Flexibility within the policy framework is important for determining the best tactics and deliverables to address unique needs;
- Languages selected to be translated are anchored by the latest census data;
- Not all communications are translated – focus topics include critical information and key organizational priorities;
- There is a reliance on third-party language line services and 311 services where applicable; and
- A phased approach to policy implementation is recommended, starting with critical focus areas and expanding over time.

### Policy Framework Recommendations

Based on best practices and research findings, City staff recommend the following scope and criteria for the multilingual policy framework:

- Translation may be triggered in languages that are spoken most often at home by 5% or more of Surrey residents, based on current census data (see Appendix ‘I’). Based on current census data, that would mean language translation in Punjabi would occur;
- Priority translation for topics that include critical information and major community initiatives;
- Consideration of translation for specific community/Town Centre priorities;
- Methods and mediums of communication will be determined by target audience and highest impact; and
- Phased implementation with ongoing evaluation and community feedback.

An illustrative example of how translation may be applied based on policy framework recommendations is shown in Appendix “III”.

### **FUNDING**

Funding to support the initial phase of Multilingual Communications Policy development and implementation is available in the 2024 Corporate Services Operating Budget.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council endorse the policy framework and direct staff to proceed with developing and implementing a policy to guide the City’s multilingual communication practices, as described in this report.

Joey Jatinder Singh Brar  
General Manager, Corporate Services

\* Appendices available upon request

Appendix “I” – Surrey Demographics

Appendix “II” – Current Translation Capabilities

Appendix “III” – Example: Translation applied to recommended policy framework