



TORONTO STAFF REPORT

December 17, 2001

To: Administration Committee

From: M. Joan Anderton, Commissioner, Corporate Services Department

Subject: **City of Toronto Multilingual Services Policy**

Purpose:

This report outlines a multilingual services policy for the City of Toronto. The goal of the policy is to affirm the City's commitment to ensuring that City information is made available to all its residents. It formalizes practices already in place, and provides guidelines for staff in determining how residents can best be served through the use of multilingual services.

A separate policy addressing barrier-free communications for seniors and people with disabilities will be developed.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Recommendations contained in the report are mindful of the need for accountability. Costs for providing multilingual services are to continue to be borne by the individual departments or programs. There is a small financial impact as a result of the recommendations of this report. Increasing the volume of French translations to ensure that French is included on all documents where another language is provided (in full or in summary form) will cost the City an additional estimated \$8,000 per year. This cost will be spread across all departments; thus the impact will be fairly insignificant on each individual department or service area.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

1. The City of Toronto multilingual services policy be comprised of the following four components, as described further in this report:
 - fundamental principles on which multilingual services are based;
 - guidelines in determining priorities for multilingual services;
 - description of French Language Services delivery;
 - general procedures and operational guidelines.
2. The City of Toronto adopt the multilingual services policy as outlined in this report and that appropriate officials be given authority to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

Previous policies:

Of the seven amalgamating municipalities, the former Metro and the former City of Toronto had policies referring to multilingual access. These municipalities had designated multilingual staff who provided translation and interpretation services. The other municipalities provided multilingual services on an informal basis. (appendix 1)

Current Approach:

Since amalgamation, City departments have had uniform access to translation and interpretation services.

In 2000, the City of Toronto provided residents with oral interpretations in 52 languages and written translations in 37 languages. These services are provided by the Multilingual Services Unit of the Corporate Communications Division. The unit serves all City departments, as well as many agencies. High volume clients include Public Health, the Works and Emergency Services Department, Parks and Recreation and the City's various housing organizations. Staff in the Multilingual Services provide a full range of services ranging from consultation on demographics of a neighbourhood and identification of prominent languages, to translation, interpretation, through to project completion.

Toronto's Diversity:

Toronto's diverse population makes it one of the most multilingual cities in the world. More than half of Toronto's residents (52%) have come from outside of Canada. Toronto is recognized world-wide as a city that embraces its different communities. The City's vision reflects the values and traditions of a diverse, democratic society.

Process for developing this policy:

Staff consulted with a variety of stakeholders including Members of Council, representatives from the Access and Equity Unit of the CAO's Office and staff from departments and agencies.

Comments:

1) Principles

It is recommended that the following fundamental principles form the basis of the City of Toronto's multilingual services policy:

- a) The City of Toronto recognizes that the ethnic diversity of our community is a source of social, cultural and economic enrichment and strength.
- b) The City of Toronto recognizes that providing multilingual services is an effective way to reach individuals, groups and organizations of diverse communities to allow them to access City services and programs.
- c) Adoption of this policy is another step in the implementation of the Council-approved report of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity (December, 1999) which states:
“All residents shall be entitled to municipal services and programs which are racially sensitive, culturally and linguistically appropriate, gender appropriate, accommodate disability, and are adequately resourced to ensure equitable access and outcomes.”
- d) The need to provide multilingual services must be addressed in communications plans that support City of Toronto programs.
- e) The City of Toronto will provide high quality, accurate translations that meet professional standards.
- f) To ensure efficiency and accountability in the provision of multilingual services, the City shall deliver multilingual services, that meet the diverse needs of its many audiences, in the most timely and cost effective manner through the Multilingual Services Unit, Corporate Communications Division.

2) Guidelines for Determining Priorities for Multilingual Services

The delivery of multilingual services requires sound judgement and decision-making in ascertaining how interpretation and translation needs can be met in the most effective manner. It is important to first identify the target audience(s). Departmental and agency staff responsible for specific public services or programs are the most familiar with their audiences' needs. The decision to translate a document or provide interpretation services into one or more languages requires that a number of factors be considered:

- a) Demographics: The City of Toronto's population, as identified by home language in the most recent census data is outlined in appendix 2. Demographic information is useful when a particular message is targeted to all City residents. Languages accessed through the City's Language Line Services (over-the-phone interpretation service) is also a useful guide.

- b) Language needs of a particular community: When narrowing the target audience to specific communities, the language needs of ethno-racial groups in those communities must be determined. This is often the case for certain public health or public education programs where staff are able to identify specific ethnic communities, or specific population groups, as the intended recipients of a message.
- c) Language needs of a particular geographic area or neighbourhood: When the message is intended for easily identifiable geographic areas, the prominent languages spoken in that particular area must be determined. This is an approach often used by Works and Emergency Services, for example, when it communicates information about road or watermain work in a particular neighbourhood.
- d) Type of City information: Priorities may also be established based upon the nature and type of information. For example, a document which addresses life-threatening issues such as carbon monoxide poisoning or immunization is identified as a priority for translation. The length of a document should also be taken into consideration; for many documents a summary is appropriate.
- e) The City of Toronto Advertising Policy, adopted by Council at its meeting of July 24, 2001, addresses the purchase of advertising in newspapers that publish in languages other than English. The Advertising Policy states that 'much of the City's social marketing/public information advertising is directed at those most in need. There are instances where mainstream outlets do not reach the target audiences for these messages. Therefore, advertisements may be placed in newspapers that publish in languages other than English.' The Advertising Policy also states 'that advertising be based on a communications plan which includes identification and assessment of the target audience and how best to reach the target audience within budget'.

The Multilingual Services Unit is in regular contact with the Access and Equity Office, the Public Health Division, Social Services, Housing Services and the Urban Development Services Department to keep up-to-date on population trends and immigration patterns, as well as language needs for new arrivals to the city. This is supplemented, as appropriate, by information obtained from school boards.

3) French Language Services

The provision of French language services is outlined in the Government of Ontario's French Language Services Act and the Federal Government's Official Languages Act. The federal government translates all documents into the two official languages and ensures that federal government services are available in either English or French.

The Province of Ontario's French Language Services Act guarantees each individual the right to receive provincial government services in 23 designated areas of the province; the City of Toronto is one such area. Under the Act, municipalities are not required to provide French

language services, even in designated areas. Municipalities are responsible for deciding whether or not to provide their services in French.

This policy recommends that French translation of documents be provided (in full or in summary form) whenever public information materials are translated into another language. Excepted from this is the purchase of advertising which is addressed separately in this policy.

4) General Operating Procedures

In order for multilingual services to be delivered consistently across the City, it is useful to include a number of operational guidelines as part of this policy.

- a) Departments must determine budgets and include translation and interpretation services in their annual workplans.
- b) Departments should provide as much notice as possible to Multilingual Services regarding upcoming translation projects to ensure print and production deadlines are met.
- c) In conjunction with the Multilingual Services Unit, departments should evaluate the effectiveness of translation and interpretation in reaching their audiences and achieving their objectives.
- d) The Multilingual Services Unit in Corporate Communications will continue to broker multilingual services for city departments and agencies at competitive rates.
- e) Departments/programs providing written materials in third languages should include the phrase “oral interpretation available in additional languages.” The provision of interpretation services can be through Language Line Services (over the phone) or by City staff, where appropriate.
- f) Where appropriate, individual units in departments should establish lists of employees who speak other languages and who are willing to provide an informal interpretation service to help overcome language barriers in the delivery of customer service.
- g) The City of Toronto work with the City of Toronto French Committee to ensure the delivery of cost effective multilingual services to the French community using the existing French networks.

Conclusions:

The multilingual services policy for the City of Toronto provides principles, guidelines and operating procedures for the effective delivery of multilingual and French language services to its communities. A separate policy addressing barrier-free communications for seniors and people with disabilities will be developed.

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Appendix 1

Applicable policies of former Municipalities

Metro Toronto:

The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto passed its Ethnoracial Access to Metropolitan Services Policy on August 15, 1990 (Report No. 23 of the Management Committee). The policy stated that:

- "The Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto reaffirms its commitment to the principle that the ethnoracial diversity of our community is a source of social, cultural and economic strength;
- The Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto recognizes that individuals, groups and organizations of diverse ethnoracial minority communities encounter barriers in their efforts to gain access to services and derive equal benefit from the services directly provided, purchased and contracted by the Municipality;
- The Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto undertake to develop specific measures to ensure that individuals, groups and organizations representative of diverse ethnoracial minority communities have access to racially sensitive, culturally appropriate services, and are able to participate in the planning, design, development and delivery of services directly provided, purchased and contracted by the Municipality.

Former City of Toronto:

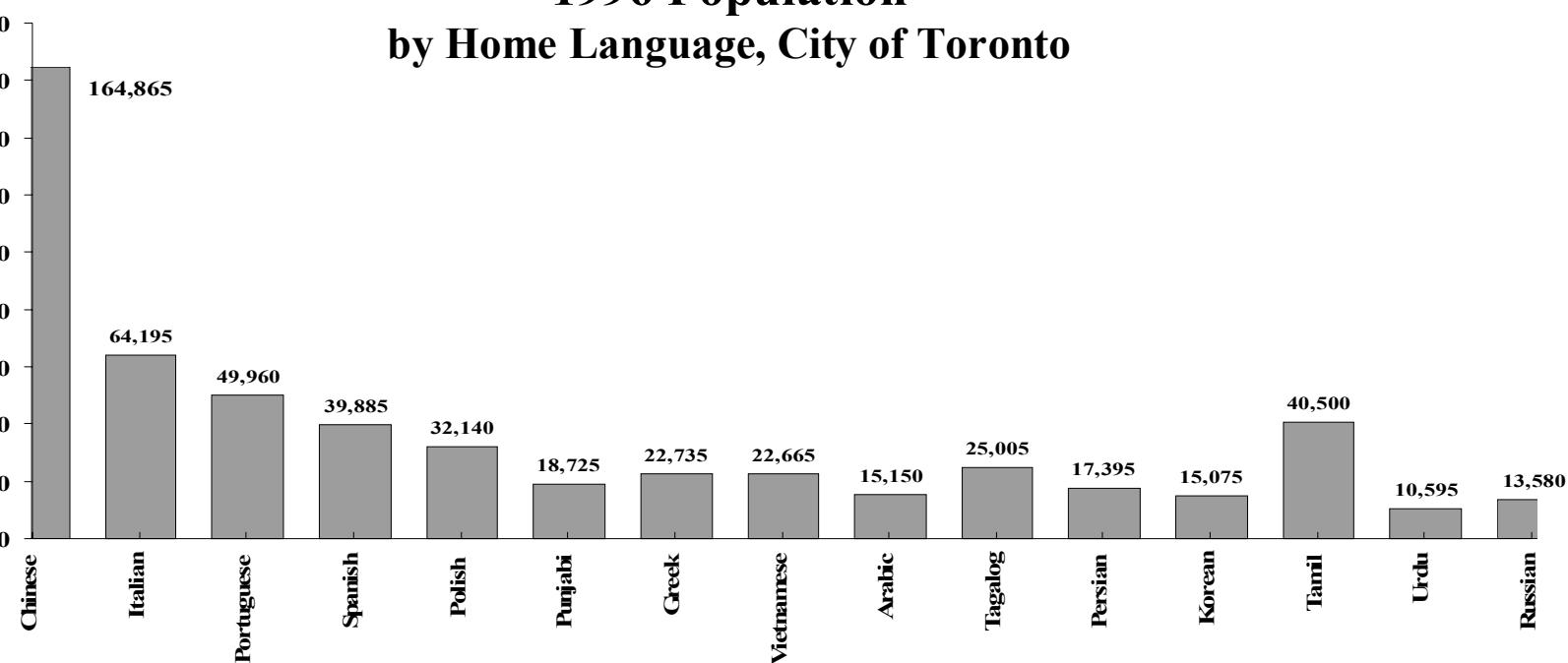
The City of Toronto adopted a Multi-lingual Access Program on May 6 and 13, 1991 (Executive Committee Report No. 9) and June 1993 (Executive Committee Report No. 26). The Multi-lingual Access Program stated that:

"...the City recognizes its obligation to make its services available to racial and ethnic groups. This responsibility includes facilitating access to services by removing barriers that may be caused by average complexity, language differences or discrimination."

And

"The City of Toronto is responsible for removing barriers that may be presented by organizational complexity, language differences, cultural insensitivity, racial intolerance and discriminatory attitudes and practices."

1996 Population by Home Language, City of Toronto



Source: Statistics Canada 1996 Census