



# Language and Translation Policy

Policy Category: Governance/Protocol

Policy No.:

Implementing Procedure No.:

**Approving Authority:**  
Council

**Effective Date:** 2024

**Approved or Last Reviewed Date:** N/A

**Next Review Year:** 2029

**Area(s) this policy applies to:**

All City of Markham departments.

This policy does not apply to:

- Members of Council (including their communications to residents)
- City's Agencies and Corporations
- Legislation, bylaws, contract/ service delivery obligations
- Election/By-Election communications

**Owner Department:**

Corporate Communications

**Related Policy(ies):**

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005

Note: Questions about this policy should be directed to the Owner Department.

## 1. Purpose Statement *(Outline why the organization is issuing the policy and its desired effect or outcome of the policy)*

This Policy establishes the language of official **City** business, while also considering the use of additional languages for the purpose of reaching community members for disseminating **Critical or Sensitive Information**.

## 2. Applicability and Scope Statement *(Who and what this policy applies to and/or affects)*

This Policy applies to all **City** departments.

This Policy does not apply to:

- **Councillors** (including their communications to residents)
- **City's Agencies and Corporations**
- Legislation, building codes, technical standards and requirements, or pre-existing bylaws or contract/ service delivery obligations, internal policies
- Election/By-Election communications



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**3. Background** *(Indicate any reasons, history, and intent that led to the creation of the policy)*

This Language and Translation Policy has been established in accordance with the **City’s** Strategic plan, Building Markham’s Future Together 2020-2026. Markham is a culturally diverse and multilingual community. Generally, the **City** does not translate day-to-day operational and service-related communications. This Policy outlines principles and criteria for translation and enables data-driven decision-making. Its objective is to support an equitable and well-balanced approach to serve Markham’s diverse population.

Translating materials in multiple languages may set precedents, result in significant costs for the municipality and makes it challenging to maintain consistency. According to the 2024 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, 92% of residents expressed satisfaction with the **City’s** communication in languages they understand. Moreover, 90% of residents agree that the **City** promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.

Recent 2021 census data indicates that 90% of Markham residents are proficient in one of Canada’s official languages. As of 2021, the top five non-official languages spoken in the **City** are Cantonese, Mandarin, Tamil, Farsi and Urdu. Residents who do not speak English can access existing translation services or seek assistance from **City staff**.

**4. Definitions** *(If applicable, define any terminology or interpret meanings of a general term)*

“**City**” means The Corporation of the City of Markham.

“**City Clerk**” means the City Clerk and Returning Officer of the **City**.

“**City Staff**” means individuals who are hired on a temporary, part-time, contract, or permanent basis by the City, and who receive financial remuneration from the **City** for their employment.

“**Communications**” – means any material disseminated by Corporate Communications by way of media content, press materials, newsletters, social media, public information, digital or non-digital, and web content.

“**Council**” means the Council of the **City**.

“**Councillor**” means a member of **Council**.

“**Critical or Sensitive Information**” means information that will or may impact the health and safety of Markham residents. Furthermore, it may relate to information that influences civic engagement or local democracy and should be prioritized and thus additional translation efforts must be made to communicate the information.



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“**Information**” means facts provided or learned about something or someone.

### 5. Policy Statements *(Detail the specific regulations, requirements, or modifications to organizational behaviour to be addressed by this policy)*

#### 5.1 Language Guidelines

The **City’s** language for communications is English and all **City** communications will be disseminated in English. In emergency situations, **Critical and Sensitive Information** is to be provided in English. French translation will be made available upon request, recognizing it as one of Canada’s official languages.

The Province of Ontario has designated the **City** as one of the 26 municipalities governed by the French Language Services Act. While this designation does not extend to **City** services, we are committed to giving special consideration to communicating in French and other relevant languages for items related to **Critical and Sensitive Information**, especially those concerning public safety.

#### 5.2 Translation Guidelines

The **City** will ensure **City Communications** and **Information** about municipal programs, services, bylaws and public meetings can be instantly translated through online tools embedded in the **City’s** website. In emergencies, translation of **Information** will be considered and released as soon as possible.

Corporate Communications will make a determination regarding the translation and interpretation of **Information**. When making a determination, Corporate Communications will take into account various factors including the following:

- issuance timelines,
- the **Information’s** lifespan,
- potential benefits of translation for enhanced engagement,
- financial considerations and available budget resources,
- adherence to **City** service and program requirements.

The **City** will also assess the financial implications and budget resources available to ensure the implementation of this Policy.

If **Critical or Sensitive information** is targeted at a localized area, Corporate Communications, in consultation with the impacted department will determine which languages will be used for translation. Translated material is to be reviewed and approved by Corporate Communications, be based on research and demonstrated operational needs and be used and distributed on an as-needed basis.



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	<b>City-wide Corporate Communications</b>	<b>Critical/Sensitive Information</b>	<b>Localized Area Information</b>
<b>Language(s) used</b>	English	English in Emergencies with consideration for top 5 additional languages (Statistics Canada data).	English, with additional languages considered based on linguistic make-up of community.
<b>Example</b>	News Release, Marketing, Social <b>Media</b> Posting, By-Laws, Reports, Program Information and <b>Information</b> hosted on Markham Portal (translation tool available)	Markham Fire & Emergency Services <b>Information</b> , public health, emergency management communications.	Exhibition showcasing cultural community, signage pertaining to localized event or program

**Online:** The **City’s** website content can be translated into over 120 languages using an online translation tool.

**In-Person:** The **City** offers limited translation services through the use of **City Staff** with secondary language skills. Best efforts will be made to accommodate requests for in-person language translation including American Sign Language (ASL).

**By Phone:** The **City’s** Contact Centre offers translation services upon request through a third-party provider. Contact Centre staff with secondary language skills may be available to provide translation support.

**5.3 Accessible Formats**

- The **City** provides closed captioning of Council and Standing Committee meetings for the deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- The **City** will consider requests for specific document translation where the file requested is not on the **City’s** website and cannot be auto-translated through web tool.
- The **City** will consider requests for live interpretation on a case by case basis.
- For **City**-hosted public meetings and consultations, if requested by a member of the public at least 5 business days’ prior, the **City** will endeavour to provide live sign language interpretation.
- The **City** will strive to ensure communication methods use plain language and are user friendly, accessible, and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliant.

**6. Roles and Responsibilities** *(Outline roles and responsibilities of those involved in the implementation of the policy)*

**Council** is responsible for approving this policy as endorsed by the **Executive Leadership Team**.



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The **City Clerk** will be responsible for posting this Policy to the **City's** intranet.

The leadership of Corporate Communications will be responsible for the interpretation of this Policy, as well as the development of procedures for the effective and efficient implementation of the Policy.

Department Head is responsible for ensuring that they and their employees know and comply with this Policy and all related Policies in an effort to effectively provide consistent language and translation.

Questions should be directed to the Manager of Corporate Communications.