



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: December 17, 2024

SUBJECT: City of Markham Language and Translation Policy
PREPARED BY: Bryan Frois, Senior Manager, Strategy, Communications & Executive Operations

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report titled “City of Markham Language and Translation Policy” be received; and,
- 2) That Council adopt the Language and Translation Policy attached as Attachment A to this report; and further,
- 3) That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Markham’s Language and Translation Policy establishes English as the official language of all City communications. The Policy applies to all City departments and is managed by Corporate Communications. The policy does not apply to Members of Council, City agencies and corporations, and Elections Markham. As an official language of Canada, French will be provided upon request. Additional languages will be considered for translation should the information be of a critical or sensitive nature. Markham will consider translation into all or one of the top five non-official languages spoken in Markham as per the latest Statistics Canada census information.

The City currently provides language support services through the Contact Centre, in-person or by phone. The City of Markham website can be translated into over 120 languages using readily available online translation tools. The City also endeavours to provide accessible formats, including sign language interpretation, upon request and with sufficient advance notice. Corporate Communications will make a determination regarding the translation and interpretation of information while considering various factors including information lifespan, benefits of translation, financial considerations and adherence to City service and program requirements.

PURPOSE:

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.

BACKGROUND:

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.

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.

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Information and Communications Standards list rules for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communication that people with disabilities can access. Accessible formats, also known as alternate formats, are ways of presenting printed, written, or visual material so that people with print disabilities can access it. Communication supports are ways for people to access audio information visually. This includes sign language interpretation and captions. The City will endeavour to work with those in the community who request these supports, provided that the requests are made in advance.

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.

Translating materials in multiple languages may set precedents, impact efficiency, result in significant costs for the municipality, and make 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.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Not Applicable

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Markham’s Strategic Plan, Building Markham’s Future Together 2020-2023 included an action item (Goal 1, Objective 1, Action 3) to develop a corporate-wide translation policy to ensure consistency in translation services across the corporation. Markham is a cultural and linguistic mosaic and Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan aims to ensure that all community members feel welcome, engaged and included. Markham’s Language and Translation Policy establishes the official City language of business while considering non-official languages with the goal of increasing community engagement and sharing critical and sensitive information.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

People Services – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Office of the CAO – Corporate Communications

RECOMMENDED BY:

Claudia Storto
City Solicitor and Director, People Services

Bryan Frois
Senior Manager, Corporate
Communications

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: City of Markham Language & Translation Policy