



P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Item No. 03**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**March 21, 2017**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Maggie MacDonald, Managing Director, Government Relation and External  
Affairs

**DATE:** March 21, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Gateway Signs

---

### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

Council motion dated June 2, 2015 that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report outlining the implications of updating the HRM Gateway signs located on the 100 series highways. Branding, multi-lingual messaging and financial implications should be addressed in the staff report. The current signs were installed in 2003 and do not reflect the multicultural nature of our communities or the recent brand implementation.

#### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act authorizes municipal traffic authorities to cause appropriate signs to be erected and maintained subject to provincial authority and certain provisions.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 2003, Regional Council approved gateway signage to be installed at 100 series highways entering the municipality. HRM Gateway signs are large signs installed on 100-series highways at entry points to the Municipality (Highway 101 near Mt. Uniacke, Highway 102 near Enfield, and Highway 103 near Hubbards). Those signs acknowledged Halifax Regional Municipality as "Home to Canada's East Coast Navy". It was noted at the time that the signs would help the municipality increase awareness and appreciation in the community and recognize the contribution of the Navy and CFB Halifax to the overall community. This initiative was linked to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halifax Dockyard and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the navy in 2010.

As noted in the Origin section of this report, Regional Council has asked staff to investigate the possibility of replacing these signs with messaging that is more reflective of HRM's multicultural community. It was noted during the discussion at the June 2, 2015 meeting that signs should only be updated where there is a need to repaint, repair, or replace signs. There was some debate regarding which languages should be included with suggestions of English, French, Mi'kmaq/First Nations, Gaelic, and Arabic.

## DISCUSSION

Multilingual communication is one way to recognize the various cultures that make up a community. The Municipality has supported multilingual communications through the production of the Newcomers Guide and Welcoming Newcomer Rack Cards translated into Nepali, Farsi, Mandarin and Arabic. Support for Syrian Refugees has included information on municipal services in Arabic. Through the 311 service, the municipality is able to support the broader community by providing services in 150 languages. In this context, gateway signage offers another possible opportunity to recognize the diverse groups that comprise the Halifax region.

Multilingual signage is used in a number of Canadian provinces and cities (see Table 1). Approaches differ, with some provinces or cities having multilingual signage only at gateway points, while others require multilingual text on a broader range of signs. In all but one case, multilingual signage has incorporated Canada's two official languages.

City/Province	Location(s)	Languages
Toronto, ON	Highways	French and English
Victoria, BC	Tsilhqot'in community gateway points	English and Tsilhqot'in
Alberta	City streets, national parks and historic sites	French and English
New Brunswick	All public signage	French and English

The province of Nova Scotia has no multilingual signage legislation or multilingual signage policies. Likewise, the municipality does not have policies or by-laws that address multilingual signage or communications. The municipal Diversity and Inclusion Office is creating a more comprehensive plan to recognize various communities and promote an appreciation of diversity. As this report precedes the development of that plan, staff are relying on Council direction and using the opportunity presented by gateway signage to recognize specific cultures as existing signage is replaced while recognizing that future legislation, policies or procedures may still be needed to establish when and how multiple languages will be considered and applied to any sign, other municipal asset or communication activity

Because the Halifax region is a growing and diverse group of communities, it would be difficult to ensure all relevant languages are present in signage, publications and communications produced by the municipality. In addition, road signage must take into consideration driver safety. Studies have shown that bi-lingual and multilingual signage requires more reading and processing time than unilingual signage<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, an approach is required that balances the desire to represent multi-culturalism on signage while ensuring that a manageable number of languages are represented.

In this case, two recent developments can be used to determine which languages could appear on gateway signage as the municipality has taken further steps to develop sustainable relationships with targeted communities.

First, the signing of the Comeau Agreement in June 2015 has led to the establishment of the Halifax Acadian French Partnership which, among other outcomes, aims to advise the municipality to:

*Establish procedures and practices that will promote the transitioning of the municipality to bilingual signage along public roads, public parks and building where it is desirable, feasible and under the sole discretion and responsibility of Halifax. (Nova Scotia Human Rights Restorative Agreement 2014)*

<sup>1</sup> [Evaluating the effects of bilingual traffic signs on driver safety and performance. Transport Canada Design and Comprehension of Bilingual Traffic Signs.](#)

Second, in December 2015 Regional Council adopted a Statement of Reconciliation which says, in part:

*Today we declare that we stand with Canada's big city Mayors and with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and commit ourselves to learning from the lessons of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to taking action to ensure the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people are fully acknowledged in the great cities we seek to build*

The above statements represent commitments to supporting the multicultural and linguistic needs of the historic residents and settlers of the Halifax region. Therefore, selecting to offer multilingual signage on gateway signs in French and Mi'kmaq, in addition to English, would serve to support these agreements. Engagement specifically on gateway signage has not taken place with members of the aboriginal community in advance of this report returning to Regional Council. Specific engagement will be undertaken as part of on-going outreach to Aboriginal communities.

There are currently three gateway signs at 100-series entry points to HRM (Highway 101 near Mount Uniacke, Highway 102 near Enfield and Highway 103 near Hubbards). These signs are not due for immediate replacement. When these signs are replaced, the design will need to align with the municipal brand strategy. It costs the municipality approximately \$2,700 to replace one of these signs and \$1350 to reface the sign, with associated installation costs of \$900 in both cases. Therefore, the estimated cost to replace all gateway signage is \$6,750 - \$10,800 plus tax, depending on the option chosen. There may be additional costs depending on the graphics used and the Province would have to approve any proposed design. As signs are replaced, they will be replaced with a multilingual welcome in French, English, and Mi'kmaq and with appropriate branding.

As the Diversity and Inclusion Office continues to develop relationships with communities and works to engrain diversity and inclusion plans into municipal programs and services, we will continue to identify opportunities to share information on municipal services in ways and language that meet the community's needs

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Costs will be budgeted in appropriate Business Units as signs are replaced.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The languages intended for inclusion are based on Council direction stemming from discussions with the Acadian and Francophone community and previous outreach to Aboriginal communities.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

---

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Tracey Jones-Grant 902.490.3677

---