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Item No. 11.1.9
Halifax Regional Council
June 29, 2021

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Jerry Blackwood, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 3, 2021

SUBJECT: French Services Strategy

ORIGIN

The Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership (Partenariat acadien et francophone d'Halifax)¹ has called for a municipal French services strategy to ensure accessible and equitable municipal services for Acadian and Francophone residents. Both external consultations with community members and internal consultations with business units have identified the need for corporate guidelines directing the strategic planning of French-language services with consistency and sustainability for the Municipality. The CAO has tasked the French Services Advisor of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion with developing a corporate French services strategy.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39 provides:

Section 34

(1) The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

...

(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

Section 35

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

¹ This joint committee was created following the signing of a restorative agreement between the Halifax Regional Municipality and Lucien Comeau regarding school taxes.

(1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall

...

(d) review the drafts of all proposed by-laws and policies and make recommendations to the Council with respect to them

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Adopt the attached French-Language Services Strategy as set out in Attachment 1; and
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out the actions contained in the French-Language Services Strategy as part of the annual budgeting process.

BACKGROUND

In August 2015, the Halifax Regional Municipality signed a restorative agreement with Lucien Comeau, an Acadian Parent who had filed a human rights complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission regarding the absence of supplementary education funding for Conseil scolaire acadien provincial in the Halifax region. As part of the restorative agreement, a joint committee consisting of members of the Acadian and Francophone community as well as staff of the municipality and the Provincial Office of Acadian Affairs and the Francophonie, the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership (Partenariat acadien et francophone d'Halifax) was established to promote constructive relations between the municipality and the Acadian and Francophone community as well as collaboration within the community. The development and implementation of a French services policy for the municipality being one of its three goals, the Partnership has called for a corporate French services strategy to incorporate French service consideration into the business planning of the municipality. The Partnership has followed closely the progress of this initiative and has dedicated one of its subcommittees to advise on it.

Community consultations conducted by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in 2017 showed dissatisfaction of local Acadian and Francophone residents regarding the lack of municipal services and communications delivered in French, the general underrepresentation of the community in the municipal government as well as the disconnect between the municipality and the community. One of the key recommendations proposed the development of corporate policies to ensure consistent financial and human resources dedicated to French services.

An internal assessment conducted between 2017 and 2018 pointed out the mostly ad-hoc nature of French services currently being offered by the municipality and the lack of strategic planning of municipal resources for French services at the corporate level. The development of a corporate French services strategy was stated as the top recommendation.

In 2018, the municipality created a permanent position of French Services Advisor, the duties of whom include the development of a corporate strategy of French services.

DISCUSSION

English-French bilingualism is a crucial value of the Canadian society and a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian identity. The [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) states the importance of language rights and a variety of other acts support access to French services, including the [Official Languages Act](#) and the Nova Scotia [French Language Services Act](#).

According to the 2016 Census data, the Halifax Regional Municipality has the largest Acadian and Francophone community in Nova Scotia, with 12,255 residents whose mother tongue is French, representing 3.1 per cent of the total population of the municipality and 36.8 per cent of the total Francophone population across the province. In addition, it also has the largest bilingual population in the province, with 49,585 self-identified bilingual individuals, representing 12.4 per cent of the total population of the municipality.

The French-language Services Strategy aims to establish a road map towards a municipal government where the Acadian and Francophone community is actively engaged in its services, programs and decision-making processes; ultimately, to become a region where members of this community can flourish. This must be achieved while respecting current internal resources, capacity and business planning direction.

It is structured around the five priorities of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework: Inclusive Public Service, Inclusive Work Environment, Equitable Employment, Meaningful Partnerships, and Accessible Information and Communication. In each priority area are strategic objectives and actions in alignment with community needs, internal resources and capacity as well as business planning directions identified in previous studies. Strategic actions are organized in a three-phase model, with suggested lead(s), potential success measures and possible timelines.

In January 2020, a draft of the French-language Services Strategy was presented to the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership. Multiple consultations were conducted as well to collect feedback from community members. In December 2020, the draft French-language Services Strategy was sent to all business unit directors for review. The current version has incorporated all the feedback received externally and internally.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Regional Council's approval of the French Language Services Strategy is not expected to have any significant financial implications. Should any impacts be identified, they will be brought forward as part of future operating budgets and will represent additional budget pressures.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion will continue to seek external funding opportunities to fund some of the key recommendations, such as French language training and translation services funded through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services*.

RISK CONSIDERATION

In light of potential impact of COVID-19, the implementation of the strategy could be impeded due to Council priority and direction. However, since the strategy development process included community engagement, and this is the first time a French-language Services Strategy is being proposed, there is potential reputational risks associated with not accepting the proposed strategy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The initial community consultation conducted in 2017 has been one of the drivers of this project. The consultation report (Attachment 2) identified key barriers for Acadian and Francophone residents to access municipal services and made recommendations for removing these barriers. One of the top recommendations was to create a corporate policy on French services.

Between 2017 and 2018, an internal consultation with business units was conducted to collect baseline data regarding French services, identify gaps and formulate recommendations aligned with resources, capacity and business planning directives. This internal assessment report (Attachment 3) also listed the

creation of a corporate French services strategy and an action plan as one of the key steps forward.

During the development of the French Services Strategy, community consultations were conducted in January 2020 to present the draft strategy to community members and collect feedback. Participants were invited to rank the key strategic actions listed in the draft strategy. The highest-ranking recommendation for action was to create corporate policies on French services dealing with communications, signage, and municipal service delivery.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council may choose not to accept the proposed French Services Strategy. However, it is recommended that the Regional Council adopt some key recommendations in the Strategy to demonstrate the Municipality's commitment to building constructive relationships with the Acadian and Francophone community. Regional Council could propose changes or amendments to the proposed French Services Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: French-language Services Strategy
Attachment 2: French Services Focus Group Report
Attachment 3: French-language Services Internal Assessment Report

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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French-Language Services Strategy

Halifax Regional Municipality

Prepared by:

Ziyan Yang

Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO

02/08/21



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Executive Summary

English-French bilingualism is a crucial value of the Canadian society and a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian identity. The [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom](#) states the importance of language rights and a variety of other acts support access to French services, including the [Official Languages Act](#) and the Nova Scotia [French Language Services Act](#).

Acadians constitute the first permanent settlement from France in Canada and are considered one of the founding peoples of Canada. Together with Francophones from across Canada and the globe, they have contributed to the economic, cultural and social vitality of Halifax. Today, the Halifax Regional Municipality has the largest Acadian and Francophone community in Nova Scotia and it counts for more than half of the self-identified bilingual individuals in the province.

Following the restorative agreement with Lucien Comeau regarding school taxes collected from Acadians and Francophones that were used to fund only English-language schools, the municipality has been committed to building constructive relationships with its Acadian and Francophone community. Both external consultations with community members and internal consultations with business units have identified the need for corporate guidelines directing the strategic planning of French-language services with consistency and sustainability for the municipality. The position of French-language Services Advisor was created in the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO to support the municipality in developing and implementing a French-language Services Strategy aiming to incorporate considerations for French-language services into municipal policies, business planning, services and programs. This strategy and implementation plan, while respecting current internal resources, capacity and business planning directions, identifies key elements for the municipality to move, at a corporate level, towards a local government where the Acadian and Francophone community is actively engaged in its services and programs as well as its decision-making processes.

Background

The Acadian and Francophone community in the Halifax Region

According to the 2016 Census data from Statistics Canada, the municipality has the largest Acadian and Francophone community in Nova Scotia, with 12,255 residents whose mother tongue is French, representing 3.1 per cent of the total population of the municipality and 36.8 per cent of the total Francophone population across the province. In addition, it also has the largest bilingual population in the province, with 49,585 self-identified bilingual individuals, representing 12.4 per cent of the total population of the municipality. Francophone and bilingual individuals are quite evenly scattered across the four federal electoral districts in the municipality, with no concentrated population in any particular neighbourhood or district.

Since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that recognizes the right to receive education in both official languages, French language education has gained more institutional support and has played a major role in sustaining the French language and culture. In Nova Scotia, the successes of French language education programs (both French first language and second language programs) have greatly contributed to the shaping of citizens that reflect and support the Canadian linguistic duality: Nova Scotia benefited from a 10.5 per cent bilingualism rate in 2016.

However, as Bailey Moreton has noticed, statistics also show that although bilingualism is on the rise in Nova Scotia between 2001 and 2016, both the number of people who primarily speak French at work and home and the population that identifies French as their mother tongue have fallen in the province over the same period¹. Unlike other traditionally Acadian communities such as Clare, Argyle and Chéticamp, the municipality, as the urban centre of the province, has maintained its Francophone population at 3.1 per cent between 2006 and 2016. However, due to the size of the municipality, the discrepancy between the urban centre and the rural areas, as well as the dispersment and diversity of the Francophone residents, there are unique challenges the local Acadian and Francophone population face to receive equitable services, to be united under a shared identity and form a strong voice to be represented at the local government.

A barrier shared by Acadian and Francophone residents across the province is the effect of historical marginalization and assimilation, which has accentuated an inferiority complex among many Francophones, especially Acadians towards their language and accent, often perceived as improper, incorrect and inferior. Community discussions have observed that Francophones across

¹ Bailey Moreton, "French in free fall, but bilingualism in Nouvelle-Écosse is on the rise": <https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/news/local/french-in-freefall-but-bilingualism-in-nouvelle-ecosse-is-on-the-rise-309523/>

the province experience “linguistic insecurity”, which translates into a general anxiety and hesitation to use their first language, French, due to their minority situation. If the vitality of a linguistic group is associated with the use of the language in various settings including at home, at school and in the community (the more it is used in diverse settings, the stronger is the vitality), in the Halifax region, the French language relies more and more on the sole environment of schools to be practised due to the predominant English-speaking environment and the lack of dedicated community space outside French schools. The municipality as a government institution closest to the local communities, could and should assume a more proactive role in enhancing the vitality of the Acadian and Francophone community through the planning and redesigning of municipal policies, programs and services.

Public, private and non-profit organizations support Acadian and Francophone communities across the province to meet their various needs (please refer to the list of French organizations in the municipality in Appendices.) Most of them have a provincial or national mandate with a chapter in Halifax. The only two community organizations serving local Acadian and Francophone residents within the boundaries of the municipality are [Conseil communautaire du Grand-Havre](#) (serving Acadian and Francophone residents in Halifax and Dartmouth) and [Acadie de Chezzetcook](#) (serving the Acadian community in Chezzetcook), both relying on very limited staff members and financial resources.

Relations between the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Acadian and Francophone community

In August 2015, the Halifax Regional Municipality signed a restorative agreement with Lucien Comeau, an Acadian parent who had filed a human rights complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (see [Comeau versus HRM – Nova Scotia Human Rights Complaint - Sept 17/13 Regional Council - HRM \(halifax.ca\)](#)) regarding the absence of supplementary education funding for Conseil scolaire acadien provincial in the Halifax region. The municipality issued an official apology (see [Municipality Signs Restorative Agreement with Lucien Comeau | Halifax](#)) to recognize the harm caused to CSAP schools by not extending supplementary education funding and contributed a grant to a charitable foundation, [La Fondation communautaire du Grand-Havre](#) to support Acadian and Francophone students and community organizations in the Halifax region. As part of the restorative agreement, a joint committee consisting of members of the Acadian and Francophone community as well as staff of the municipality and the Provincial Office of Acadian Affairs and the Francophonie, the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership (Partenariat acadien et francophone d’Halifax) was established to promote constructive relations between the municipality and the Acadian and Francophone community as well as collaboration within the community.

Since 2016, a Regional Councillor has been appointed as an official liaison between Council and the Acadian and Francophone community. In June 2018, the municipality created a permanent position of French Services Advisor. The Advisor, reporting to the Managing Director of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, liaises externally with the Acadian and Francophone community and consults internally with business units regarding French services and community engagement. It was at this point that the creation and implementation of a corporate-wide strategy of French-language services was finally possible.

Community consultations

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, through the French Services Advisor, completed multiple initiatives between 2017-19 to lay the foundation for the corporate French-language services strategy. Some of the key findings from community consultations include:

The need for community representation

- Have a designated seat for the Acadian and Francophone community at Regional Council.

Improved municipal services and programs

- Develop corporate policies to ensure consistent financial and human resources are dedicated to French-language services.
- Develop programs to support the implementation of the above policies, such as a visual identification program and a data collection system with a directory of French-speaking/bilingual employees.
- Implement accessible and equitable French services in service areas including recreation programs, 311 service, police services, fire and emergency services and human resources services.

Opportunities for employment

- Have designated permanent bilingual positions dedicated to French-language services delivery.
- Develop a corporate culture that values bilingualism through language and culture training as well as rewards and recognition programs (e.g., [bilingualism bonus](#) offered by the federal government and [Awards for Excellence in French-language Services](#) offered by the Province).

Better communication

- Improve the official website, online job application system and online voting system to make them more user-friendly for French speaking persons.
- Implement translation services to have public-facing communication materials translated into French.
- Build more constructive relations with the community through partnerships with community organizations.
- Implement bilingual signage.

French services currently offered by the municipality

In 2017 and 2018, an internal assessment was conducted to collect baseline data and information related to French services from all 11 business units including the Mayor's Office, the Council Support Office and the CAO's Office. A report was prepared with detailed analysis of the current state of French-language services offered by the municipality, current bilingual capacity, French-language

service gap in terms of service provision, communications and workforce planning as well as French-language service planning. Below are highlights of the report (for a more exhaustive list, please refer to the Internal Assessment Report):

- **311 Service:** The municipality's 311 contact centre uses an external service, Language Line, to provide interpreting services in 150 languages, including French.
- **911 and Non-Emergency Services:** With different French capacities in the four call centres handling 911 calls across the province, the 911 service also uses the Language Line to provide interpreting services, when calls are made in a language the call taker does not speak. The call centre located in the Halifax region, Intergrated Emergency Services, has some English-French capacity and utilises the same model to respond to non-emergency calls made to 902-490-5020.
- **Police Patrol and Investigation Services:** The Halifax Regional Police keeps a spreadsheet with a self-identified skill inventory for all patrol officers, including their language skills. Upon request for services in any language other than English during patrol interactions or inspections, arrangements are made to either have an internal police officer on shift who can speak the requested language or to use an external certified interpreter.
- **Prosecution Service:** Legal Services provide French trials through external contractors to those who request them.
- **French public service announcements and news releases:** Since March 2018, all news releases and public service announcements produced by the municipality have been issued in both English and French: <https://www.halifax.ca/home/news>.
- **French Micro-site:** Since April 2019, the municipality's website has included a French section: <https://www.halifax.ca/fr>. This microsite, with around 20 French webpages, provides an overview of major municipal services.
- **French Recreation Programs:** Municipal recreation programs currently include two regular French programs: French swimming lessons have been offered by municipal pools since 2013-14 and the preschool program "Fun with French" has been offered in the Halifax Peninsula area. A few other French programs were created and offered between 2016 and 2018 but discontinued due to low registration rate.
- **Solid Waste Education Materials:** The Solid Waste division publishes education and sorting materials in multiple languages, including French. The waste sorting application, the [mobile application](#) as well as various [sorting guides](#) are available in French.
- **Other Ad-hoc French Services:** depending on the availability of resources (funding, budget, French-speaking staff), various municipal divisions produce communication materials in French and conduct community outreach activities in French for the local Acadian and Francophone residents. But they are offered on an ad-hoc basis by individual divisions without any corporate guiding processes.

French-Language Services Strategy

This strategy is intended for the municipality to strategically plan and use resources at the corporate-wide level to better serve and engage local Acadian and Francophone residents. The municipality's Strategic Plan 2021-25 identifies that the municipality's vision for communities is to "boast strong social equity through meaningful engagement to build safer, more inclusive communities for all". Furthermore, the Council Priority Outcomes for communities envision that "residents are actively involved in their communities and enjoy participating and volunteering in a wide range of leisure, learning, social, recreational, cultural and civic opportunities", and "residents are empowered as stewards and advocates for their communities, and work with the municipality and others to remove systemic barriers". Aligned with these statements, this strategy aims to establish a road map towards a municipal government where the Acadian and Francophone community is actively engaged in its services, programs and decision-making processes and ultimately toward becoming a region where members of the Acadian and Francophone community can flourish.

As one of the strategies under the umbrella of the [Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Framework](#), this strategy supports its vision of the municipality as an inclusive organization that values and reflects the diverse people we serve. The strategy is structured around the five priorities of the Framework, under which are strategic objectives and actions in alignment with community needs, internal resources and capacity as well as business planning directions identified in previous studies. Strategic actions are organized in a three-phase model, with suggested lead(s), potential success measures and possible timelines. A list of Acadian and Francophone Community Organizations in the Halifax region are included in appendices.

French-Language Services Strategy and Implementation Plan

French-Language Services Strategic Goals		
1	Inclusive Public Service	To ensure that municipal services are inclusive, reflective of and accessible to the Acadian and Francophone residents.
2	Inclusive Work Environment	To create a workplace that values the Acadian and Francophone cultures.
3	Equitable Employment	To attract and retain French-speaking and bilingual talent.
4	Meaningful Partnerships	To develop internal and external partnerships that include the Acadian and Francophone community.
5	Accessible Information and Communication	To provide accessible information, in French, to the Acadian and Francophone community about municipal services and maintain ongoing communications with the community.



Phase One Strategic Actions

Goal 1 – Inclusive Public Service: To ensure that municipal services are inclusive, reflective of and accessible to the Acadians and Francophones.

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
1.1 Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public	1. Establish an annual inventory of the municipality's French-language services.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO and supported by business units	Annual inventory established	1 year
	2. Support business units to develop or increase French-language services.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO and supported by business units	# of French-language services	Recurring
1.2 Maximize the use of internal resources and strengthen internal capacity to offer French-language services	3. Develop an orientation package on French-language service resources to share with business units, including trainings, workshops and translation services.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO	Distribution, usage and evaluation of French-language service resources	1 year
	4. Provide French-language training to municipal staff.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO	# of participants in French language training	Recurring
	5. Develop supporting tools to ensure effective French-language training, including training evaluations, French language assessment tools, participants progress tracking systems and specialised and customised trainings.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO, Corporate Communications	# supporting tools developed % of satisfaction towards French language training	Recurring

	6. Provide cultural awareness workshops on Acadian and Francophone community to municipal staff.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO	# of participants in Acadian and Francophone cultural awareness workshops	Recurring
1.3 Create French-Language Services corporate policies	7. Create corporate French-language services policies on a variety of topics. (e.g. internal and external communications, signage, municipal services delivery and use of both official languages in the workplace).	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, Corporate Communications	# corporate policies created	2-3 years

Goal 2 – Inclusive Work Environment : To create a workplace that values the Acadian and Francophone cultures.

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
2.1 Provide support tools to encourage municipal employees to use French at work	8. Develop resources, materials (e.g.: cheat-sheet of French one-liners, bilingual business card template, bilingual voice message template), and on-the-job activities to promote bilingualism at work.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, Corporate Communications	# of initiatives implemented	1 year



Goal 3 – Equitable Employment : To attract and retain French-speaking and bilingual talents.

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
3.1 Ensure equitable employment of French-speaking and bilingual individuals	9. Revise and implement French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines.	Human Resources, Corporate Communications	Guidelines created	1 year
	10. Create bilingual job postings for positions with French-language requirements.	Human Resources, business units	# of bilingual job postings	Recurring
3.2 Build a workforce that reflects the Acadian and Francophone community	11. Ensure municipal representation at job fairs and community events of the Acadian and Francophone community to promote job opportunities.	Human Resources, business units	# of events and fairs attended	Recurring

Goal 4 – Meaningful Partnerships : To develop internal and external partnerships that include the Acadian and Francophone community.

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
<p>4.1</p> <p>Develop strong partnerships to improve municipal service delivery and support the flourishing of the Acadian and Francophone community</p>	<p>12. Support the work of the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO</p>	<p>Continue supporting the Partnership</p>	<p>Recurring</p>
	<p>13. Identify opportunities for business units to work with the Acadian and Francophone community organizations to improve municipal service delivery.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO and supported by business units</p>	<p># of external partnerships</p> <p># of initiatives to encourage representation of Acadian and Francophone members on municipal boards, committees and commissions</p>	<p>Recurring</p>
	<p>14. Explore ways to reduce barriers to Francophone representation on municipal boards, committees and commissions.</p>	<p>Municipal Clerk's Office</p>	<p>Francophone members on municipal boards, committees and commissions</p>	<p>Recurring</p>



Goal 5 – Accessible Information and Communication: To provide accessible information to the Acadian and Francophone community and maintain ongoing communications with the community.

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success	Duration
<p>5.1</p> <p>Provide accessible information to the Acadian and Francophone community about municipal services</p>	<p>15. Evaluate the current French micro-site and explore ways to maximize its utility and increase its content.</p>	<p>ICT, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, Corporate Communications</p>	<p>Usage of the French micro-site</p> <p># of French content published</p> <p># of webpages</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
	<p>16. Maintain the production and distribution of bilingual public service announcements and press releases and evaluate the usage; explore effective and efficient ways to communicate with the community. (e.g. bilingual titles for PSA hosted on the municipality’s website and French micro-site).</p>	<p>Corporate Communications</p>	<p># of bilingual PSAs and press releases produced</p> <p>Usage of bilingual PSAs and press releases</p>	<p>Recurring</p>
	<p>17. Host regular events to provide municipal information to the Acadian and Francophone community.</p>	<p>Business units supported by Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO</p>	<p># of initiatives that promote municipal services and engage the community</p>	<p>Recurring</p>
	<p>18. Undertake regular community consultations with the Acadian and Francophone community.</p>	<p>Business units supported by Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO</p>		<p>Recurring</p>

Phase Two Strategic Actions

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
Inclusive Public Service				
<p>1.2</p> <p>Maximize the use of internal resources and strengthen internal capacity to offer French-language services</p>	<p>1. Explore innovative ways to maximize the use of internal resources to offer French services.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO and supported by business units</p>	<p># of initiatives to provide French services</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
Inclusive Work Environment				
<p>2.2</p> <p>Increase bilingual signage at municipal properties and facilities</p>	<p>2. Develop translation guidelines with consideration given to English-French signage requirements and establish an inventory of municipal signs that would benefit from being bilingual.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ ANSAIO, Corporate Communications</p>	<p>Guidelines and inventory established</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
Equitable Employment				
3.1 Ensure equitable employment of French-speaking and bilingual individuals	3. Implement French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines.	Human Resources, Corporate Communications and supported by Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO	Guidelines implemented	1-2 years
Accessible Information and Communication				
5.1 Provide accessible information to the Acadian and Francophone community about municipal services	4. Support the development of corporate accessible communication guidelines and translation guidelines that include a section on French communication guidelines.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, Corporate Communications	Communication and translation guidelines developed	1-2 years
	5. Where appropriate, increase the advertising of municipal services and programs through French community media channels and school system.	Business units, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, Corporate Communications	# of initiatives that promote municipal services through French community media channels and school system	1-2 years
5.2 Maintain ongoing communications with the community	6. Develop French-language community consultation guidelines.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, business units, Corporate Communications	Guidelines created	1 years

Phase Three Strategic Actions

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
Inclusive Public Service				
1.1 Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public	1. Ensure French-language services in identified service areas (e.g. 311, Emergency, Recreation and Human Resources); monitor and evaluate the municipality’s French-language services.	Corporate and Customer Services, Fire & Emergency Services, Parks and Recreation, Human Resources	# French-language services % of satisfaction towards French-language services	1-2 years
	2. Develop other supporting guidelines for the French-language services policy.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO, business units, Corporate Communications		Guidelines developed
	3. Develop and implement a tracking system to monitor the French-language services development in each business unit.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO and supported by business units	Tracking system developed and implemented	3-5 years

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
Inclusive Work Environment				
2.2 Increase bilingual signage at municipal properties and facilities	4. Where appropriate, implement bilingual signage (in accordance with the translation guidelines) when replacements take place.	Business units, Corporate Communications	# of bilingual signs implemented	2 years
2.3 Provide support tools to encourage municipal employees to use French at work	5. Create a network of French-speaking employees.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO	Network established	1-2 years
Equitable Employment				
3.1 Ensure equitable employment of French-speaking and bilingual individuals	6. Review hiring practices to ensure that applicants with French-language skills are assessed with equity during the hiring process (assessment of language skills; point system; selection boards).	Human Resources	# of French speaking/bilingual applicants for municipal positions	2-3 years
	7. Review and update French-language requirements for current and upcoming positions.	Human Resources	# of positions reviewed and updated	2-3 years

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
Meaningful Partnership				
<p style="text-align: center;">4.1</p> <p>Develop strong partnerships to improve municipal service delivery and support the flourishing of the Acadian and Francophone community</p>	<p>8. Establish a French-Language Services Advisory Committee made up of staff from all business units.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO</p>	<p>Advisory Committee established</p>	<p>1-2 years</p>
Accessible Information and Communication				
<p style="text-align: center;">5.1</p> <p>Provide accessible information to the Acadian and Francophone community about municipal services</p>	<p>9. Support the production of French communication materials according to the communication and translation guidelines.</p>	<p>Corporate Communications, business units, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO</p>	<p># of communication documents translated into French</p>	<p>Recurring</p>

Glossary

Francophone: A Francophone is a person who speaks French. According to the *2018 French Language Worldwide Report* prepared by Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, French is spoken by 300 millions speakers worldwide and is the fifth most spoken language in the world, after Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic. It is the official language of 32 States and governments, the second most studied language and the fourth most used language on the internet.

Francophile: A Francophile is a person who has a strong affinity towards French languages, cultures and histories or French people. Often times, Francophone is used to refer to those who speak French as their first language while Francophile is used to refer to non native speakers of French.

Acadian: Acadians are descendants of the French settlers that came to areas south of St Lawrence River and established the colony which became known as Acadia (*Acadie* in French), a colony of New France in northeastern North America which included parts of eastern Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Maine. Acadians have their own National Day (August 15), national flag and national Anthem (*Ave Maris Stella*).

Bilingual, bilingualism: Bilingualism is the ability to speak fluently in two languages. In Canada, the term has taken on a more particular meaning: the ability to communicate in both Canada's official languages, English and French. The federal [Official Languages Act](#) (1969), cornerstone of institutional bilingualism in Canada, declares the equality of status of English and French in Parliament and the Canadian public service at the federal level. In Nova Scotia, the provincial [French Language Services Act](#) was passed in 2004 to foster the ongoing development of the province's Acadian and Francophone community and specify the terms and conditions under which provincial institutions provide services in French.

Active offer: Active offer is a term coined by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for federal public service. The [Active Offer Guide](#) defines it as "an opening invitation to the public to use one of our two official languages when communicating with or receiving a services from the federal government". It includes a bilingual greeting, such as "Hello! Bonjour!", and visual cues, such as signs, that support this invitation.

Appendices

List of Acadian and Francophone Organisations in the Halifax Region

Name of organization	Expertise	Contact Information
Education		
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial	French public school board	https://csap.ca/ (902) 769-5460
École secondaire du Sommet	French public secondary school (6-12)	https://somet.ednet.ns.ca/ (902) 832-4302
École du Carrefour	French public secondary school (6-12)	https://carrefour.ednet.ns.ca/ (902) 433-7000
École secondaire Mosaïque	French public secondary school (9-12)	https://mosaique.ednet.ns.ca/ (902) 433-7080
École Mer et Monde	French public primary school (pre-primary-8)	http://mer-et-monde.ednet.ns.ca/ (902) 480-2180
École Beaubassin	French public primary school (pre-primary-5)	https://beaubassin.ednet.ns.ca/ (902) 457-6810
École du Grand Portage	French public primary school (pre-primary-6)	https://grand-portage.ednet.ns.ca/ (902) 864-6242
École Bois-Joli	French public primary school (pre-primary-6)	http://bois-joli.ednet.ns.ca (902) 433-7070
École Beaux-Marais	French public primary school (pre-primary-9)	http://beaux-marais.ednet.ns.ca

		(902) 827-4621
Université Sainte-Anne	French university	https://www.usainteanne.ca/ (902) 769-2114
Department of French, Dalhousie University	Post-secondary French program	https://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/french.html (902) 494-2430
Department of Modern Languages & Classics, Saint Mary's University	Post-secondary French program	https://smu.ca/academics/departments/modern-languages-and-classics.html (902) 420-5815
Department of Modern Languages, Mount Saint Vincent University	Post-secondary French program	https://www.msvu.ca/en/home/programsdepartments/BA/modernlanguages/default.aspx
The French Doctor	French-language training centre	http://www.thefrenchdoctor.com/index.html (902) 446-5709
Cultural Organizations		
Fédération culturelle acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Promotor of Francophone arts and cultures	http://fecane.ca/index.php (902) 466-1610
Alliance Française	French-language training and cultural centre	http://www.afhalifax.ca/ (902) 455-4411
Conseil communautaire du Grand-Havre	Community Centre	http://www.ccgh.ca/ (902) 435-3244
Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Organization spokesperson for the community	http://www.acadiene.ca/ (902)433-0065

L'Acadie de Chezzetcook	Acadian historic museum	http://www.acadiedechezetcook.ca/en/ (902) 827-5992
Career Services/Business		
Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Not-for-profit organization dedicated to the economic advancement of the Acadian and Francophone community.	http://cdene.ns.ca/en/ 1-866-55CDENE
YMCA/Nouvelle-Écosse au travail	Career Services Centre	http://ymcansworks.ca/fr/
Chambre de commerce francophone d'Halifax	Francophone business networks	https://www.ccfh.ca/
Parent Support/Child Development		
Canadian Parents for French	Furthering bilingualism by promoting and creating opportunities for students to learn and use French.	http://ns.cpf.ca/ (902) 453-2048 1-877-273-5233
Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Support parents and parents' associations	http://www.fpane.org/fr/ (902) 304-9533
Centre de ressources pour les familles militaires	Strengthen the well-being of all those who share the unique experience of military life.	http://www.halifaxmfr.ca/
La pirouette	Family resource and services centre	http://www.lapirouette.ca/ (902) 225-1149
Le petit voilier	French daycare	http://www.petitvoilier.ca/ (902) 435-9177
Prématornelle chez Mahé Montessori	Private bilingual Montessori program for children 2.5 – 6 years old	http://chezmahemontessori.com/index.html (902) 877-9404

Youth Organization		
Conseil jeunesse provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Foster the development of youth through its activities, meetings and campaigns.	https://www.facebook.com/pg/Boomdanstaface/about/?ref=page_internal (902) 433-2084
Women's Organization		
Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Promote women's rights and provides support to women who are business owners.	http://www.ffane.ca/Accueil
Seniors' Organization		
Regroupement des aînés de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Promote and enhance the contribution of seniors to the Acadian community in Nova Scotia.	http://rane.ns.ca/ (902) 304-9533
Immigration Services		
Immigration francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Immigration services	http://www.immigrationfrancophonene.ca/ (902) 433-2099
Health Services		
Réseau Santé	Promote and improve access to quality health and wellness services in French.	http://www.reseausantene.ca/ (902) 222-5871
Legal Services		
Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Legal services in French	http://www.ajefne.ns.ca/ (902) 433-2085
French Media		
Radio-Canada	French media	http://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/le-reveil-nouvelle-ecosse-et-t-n
Oui 98.5 FM	Community radio station	http://www.oui98.ca/

Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse

Provincial French newspaper

<http://lecourrier.com/>

French-Language Services Focus Group Report

Acadian and Francophone Community Consultations

Prepared by:

Ziyan Yang, Élisabeth Houle
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
04/08/17

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Executive Summary

Background, Methodology and Key Findings

According to the 2016 Census data from Statistics Canada, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has the largest Acadian and Francophone community in Nova Scotia, with 10,115 residents whose mother tongue is French, representing 2.5% of the total population of HRM and 34.4% of the total Francophone population across the province. In addition, it also has the largest bilingual population in the province, with 49,580 self-identified bilingual individuals, representing 12.3% of the total population of HRM.

The HRM Strategic Plan 2017-21 identifies that the municipality is “committed to delivering quality service to our people and developing healthy and liveable communities”. In 2015 the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was established to promote corporate diversity and inclusion and to support the engagement of the community in the development of public policies and plans in this area. To support the development of services to be aligned with the needs of our diverse population, including the Acadian and Francophone community, the municipality seeks to understand what barriers exist that prevent this particular community from accessing municipal services so initiatives can be developed and implemented to better serve them.

In the spring of 2017, the French-language services project coordinator and the Acadian and Francophone community liaison intern held four focus group discussions with a total of 43 community members to identify existing barriers and collect suggestions for addressing barriers in the following service areas:

- Communication with the community
- Municipal services and programs
- Representation
- Municipal and school board elections
- Employment

A survey questionnaire was also developed to collect quantitative information regarding the Focus Group participants’ knowledge and feedback of municipal services. Key findings indicated:

- Dissatisfaction with the very limited number of services offered by the municipality in French.
- Dissatisfaction with the poor quality and accessibility of the limited services offered by the municipality in French.
- Dissatisfaction with the lack of French communication materials produced by the municipality.
- Concern around the underrepresentation of the community in Regional Council and the municipal workforce.
- Concern around the disconnect between the municipality and the community.

The project coordinator and the liaison intern acknowledge the information collected only represents the opinion of a fraction of the community. However, the findings provide a great deal of insight into challenges and opportunities facing HRM in the development of more inclusive services for the Acadian and Francophone community. The project coordinator and the liaison intern were encouraged to see the participants responded to the initial invitation and participated in the discussions with great enthusiasm. The areas of concern and the constructive feedback the participants brought forward are representative of areas where significant benefits can be achieved for both the municipality and the community through collaboration and strategic planning.

Summary of Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the full list of suggestions presented in the detailed findings sections of this report. Community recommendations include:

- Regional Council have a designated seat for the Acadian and Francophone community.
- HRM develop corporate policies to ensure consistent financial and human resources are dedicated to French-language services. This may include a policy on French-language services establishing basic standards for French-language services delivery in HRM, communication guidelines, human resources guidelines aiming at building French-language capacity within HRM through human resource planning, as well as a policy or guidelines to ensure fair hiring practices for the community.
- HRM develop programs to support the implementation of the above regulations, such as a visual identification program and a data collection system with a directory of French-speaking/bilingual employees to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of French-language service delivery.
- HRM have designated permanent bilingual positions dedicated to French-language services.
- HRM implement accessible and equitable French services in the priority service areas and develop programs to promote and proactively offer the services. (See priority service areas page 14.)
- HRM improve its official website, online job application system and online voting system to make them more user-friendly for French speaking persons.
- HRM implement translation services to have public-facing communication materials translated into French. (See priority communication materials to be translated into French pages 10-11.)
- HRM build more constructive relations with the community through partnerships with community organizations. (See list of Acadian and Francophone community organizations in HRM page 34.)
- HRM develop a corporate culture that values bilingualism through language and culture training as well as rewards and recognition programs.
- HRM implement bilingual signage.

Contextualization

Focus Group Objectives

The consultations took place in the form of focus group discussions with three main objectives, which were:

- To collect qualitative and quantitative information through focus group discussions and general surveys.
- To collect feedback from the Acadian and Francophone community regarding the French language services offered by the municipality and suggestions for improvement.
- To assess the level of knowledge that the community has of municipal services and that the municipality has about the Acadian and Francophone community.

Consultation Process

Organizers/facilitators:

Ziyan Yang, French Services Project Coordinator, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Halifax Regional Municipality.

Élisabeth Houle, Liaison Intern with the Acadian and Francophone Community, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Halifax Regional Municipality.

Recruitment of focus group participants:

Participants were recruited using community organizations' networks and communication tools. The organizers recruited participants using the following communication channels:

- Internally through the Employee Hub and Intranet
- *Le Franco* (Community newspaper)
- Emails (Invitation sent to 30 French organizations)
- Social media (Partnership with community organizations)
- Newsletters (French groups, HRSB and CSAP)
- Radio-Canada (Radio interview and television segment)

The registration was on a first come first served basis, the focus groups in French reached their maximum capacity of 15 participants each. Less participation was observed for the last focus group session (in English), due to the difficulty to reach Anglophone families through the HRSB system. A total of 49 community members registered for the four sessions.

Focus group sessions:

Between April 5 and April 13, four 90-minute focus group discussions took place with three French sessions held respectively at School Le Carrefour, Halifax Central Library and School Le Sommet as well as one English session hosted at Halifax Central Library. A total of 43 community members participated in the four sessions. During the discussions, participants were invited to identify existing barriers and offer suggestions for improvement regarding the following aspects of municipal services and programs (See full agenda page 32.):

- Communication with the Acadian and Francophone community
- Municipal services and programs
- Representation
- Municipal and school board elections
- Employment

A survey questionnaire was developed to collect supplementary information regarding the community's feedback on municipal services. The survey was completed by all participants after the focus group discussions (See full survey questionnaire page 28.).

Confidentiality was assured throughout the consultation process. Group discussions were recorded for research purposes only. Participants signed a Focus Group Agreement at the beginning of each session. The surveys were completed anonymously.

Overall Observations:

- The invitation to participate in the focus group consultations was well received by the community;
- All the focus groups in French were at maximum capacity during the registration;
- Participants gave positive feedback regarding the initiative;
- Participants would like to have a follow up after the report is complete;
- Participants would like to have more consultation sessions in the future.

Note: In the following sections, all French citations were translated into English by the French Services Project Coordinator and the Liaison Intern.

Communications

Barriers

No official position/statement on bilingualism

Participants noted that the lack of an official position or statement on bilingualism within the municipality was a concern. They indicated that the difference between the three levels of government was that at the provincial and federal levels, some laws and policies enforced French language services delivery to the Acadian and Francophone community. They believed that this absence of an official position from the municipality prevented the organization from allocating resources to ensure that the community has equal access to information in their first language.

"Concerning barriers, the city does not have any official position, legislation or policy regarding its communication practices with the Acadian and Francophone population."

« En termes de barrière, la ville ne possède aucune position officielle, énoncé de loi, ou politique en termes de communication avec sa population francophone et acadienne. »

No permanent French-speaking resource person and/or communication agent

The focus groups noted that the community lacked knowledge of municipal services because there was no French-speaking resource person in HRM to provide relevant information or respond to requests in French. Some participants also mentioned that the absence of a permanent French-speaking agent in the Communications department prevented the French media from reporting news and conducting interviews about municipal issues.

"As media, our job is to report what happens, in an emergency situation, we have no contact person who speaks French at the municipality. At Halifax Regional Police, in the City, there is no one."

« Nous les médias notre métier est de rapporter ce qui se passe, en cas d'urgence nous n'avons aucun point contact en français à la municipalité, à la police il n'y a personne, à la Ville il n'y personne. »

Lack of French communication materials

A major communication barrier identified by all focus groups was the fact that all communication materials produced by the municipality were in English, with no French translation, which prevented the community from accessing information regarding services, programs and events. Most participants expressed concerns around the absence of French content on the Halifax website, a major source of information about the municipality for residents. Some participants added that the website was not well structured and was hard to navigate, which further limited its accessibility for French-speaking users.

Disconnect between the community and the municipality

Participants questioned the municipality's willingness to reach out to the Acadian and Francophone community and believed that the communication between the municipality and the community had been unidirectional. They stated that the general disconnect between the municipality and the community resulted in ineffective communication practices and a misinformed and isolated community.

"It is always a one-way communication process, we are constantly reaching out to the municipality, and they do not have any interest in our community, in everything they do, the Acadian and Francophone community is never represented."

« C'est toujours dans un même sens, c'est toujours nous qui rejoignons la municipalité, mais ils n'ont aucun intérêt envers notre communauté, dans tout ce qui se passe, la communauté francophone et acadienne n'est jamais représentée. »

Addressing Barriers

Policy on bilingualism

The groups clearly stated that Halifax needed to embrace and enforce a culture of bilingualism within its organization and create a corporate policy on French-language services and communication, which would address the following issues:

- Bilingual internal and external communications
- Bilingual communication tools
- Bilingual signage and signs
- French language services delivery
- Use of both official languages in the workplace

French-speaking resource person and/or communication agent

The groups strongly recommended that the municipality have a French-speaking resource person to inform the community and speak to French media on municipal issues. They indicated that they preferred to interact with a French-speaking employee instead of using third party interpreting services.

"We should have a contact person, for French language services, in the municipality."

« Nous devrions avoir une personne contact, pour les services en français, au sein de la municipalité. »

Communication tools

- Monthly newsletter in French to send to community organizations and community members.
- Regular information sessions in French about French-language services and programs.
- Regular community consultations to collect feedback and recommendations about the community's needs.
- Twitter account in French.
- Facebook page in French.
- Use the communication tools that already exist in the community such as the community radio station OUI 98.5, *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, *Le Franco* and Radio-Canada.

"A way to communicate and to reach to the majority of the community would be to go through the school system. The military has their resources on base, so they are not encouraged to reach for outside services. However, when those French speaking children or wives or husbands of the military are left here when their spouses are deployed, they are left with little information or a lack of French services, so going through the school system can be a good way to reach them."

Bilingual communication materials

According to the survey, 85% of the participants chose translation services as the most important service to be implemented within the municipality to ensure that communication materials produced and distributed by the municipality are bilingual. Participants also indicated the importance of translation quality and indicated that all translations should be completed by certified translators or employees whose bilingual competency had been tested. They also suggested the use of a commonly accepted terminology while translating documents due to the diverse French-speaking population.

Recommended priority communication materials to be translated into French:

- **Bilingual Website:** According to the survey, the municipality's website is the most popular medium through which participants request information regarding municipal services (39%). Translation of web pages with information on municipal services was raised as a crucial step to promote municipal services to its Francophone residents. Participants proposed the following features to be added to the municipality's website to better serve the community:
 - A French portal grouping all information about French-language services.
 - A web page with links to community organizations.
 - A FAQ page in French.
 - A system to answer information requests in French online or by email.

- **Public service announcements/news releases:** The participants mentioned many times that all announcements concerning the public should be available in both official languages.

“The city needs to ensure that when they are communicating with their Anglophone population, that the Francophone community receives the same information.”

« S’assurer que lorsque la ville communique avec sa population anglophone, que notre communauté reçoit également l’information. »

- **Newcomers’ guide:** The newcomers’ guide should be translated into French and be made available online. The printed version should be made available at various community organizations and for military families and immigrants who do not have access to the internet.
- **Printed communication materials:** there should be bilingual brochures on all municipal tourist sites, bilingual flyers about the French community in HRM displayed at the airport and tourism offices, French version of all pamphlets and guides that already exist in English regarding municipal services.
- **Bilingual signage:** All signs and displays should be bilingual to support the presence of both official languages in HRM.

Identification of bilingual employees

Participants emphasised the importance of making French services visible and accessible by identifying bilingual employees with a visual identification program similar to the *Bonjour!* program created by the Provincial department Acadian Affairs and Francophonie. They agreed that seeing bilingual service signs and employee lapel pins that indicate the availability of bilingual services would encourage them to request and use services in French.



Bonjour! visual identification program created by *Acadian Affairs and Francophonie*

(Source: <https://acadien.novascotia.ca/fr/services-et-programmes>)

Services

Barriers

Many participants had difficulties distinguishing municipal services from services offered by the federal or provincial government, which sometimes resulted in a misunderstanding of different legislative frameworks applied to French-language services.

According to the survey, 88% of the participants believed that the number of French services and programs in the municipality was either insufficient or nonexistent. 72% rated the accessibility of French services at the lowest level. The absence or lack of French services, the lack of service quality and accessibility constitute the major barriers for the community accessing municipal services. Participants noted that these three factors form a vicious circle: when French services are delivered without quality, consistency and adequate promotion, the utilization rate is often poor. A low service usage rate will lead the service providers to assume that those French services are not in demand, and thus consider service reduction or elimination, which further hinders the community's access to municipal services.

Lack of consistent bilingual service for 911 calls

Participants considered the absence of consistent bilingual service for 911 calls a severe service deficiency, as people tend to use their primary language when they are extremely sick or tired, overly stressed or facing challenging situations.

"A woman called 911. Her child was choking. The person who answered the phone did not recognize that she was speaking French. Her child was dying, and her first language took place in an emergency. It is a horrible story. She almost lost her child."

« Une femme a appelé au 911. Son enfant était étouffé. La personne qui a répondu à l'appel ne reconnaissait pas qu'elle parlait le français. Son enfant était en train de mourir et sa langue première a pris place en situation d'urgence. C'est une histoire d'horreur. Elle a presque perdu son enfant. »

Inefficient French service for 311

Most participants were not aware that the 311 Citizen Contact Centre offers services in over 150 languages, including French, using a telephone interpretation service. The few participants who have used the service by phone indicated that the option of French service was not offered in the initial menu, which prevents users from using it. Other participants who have used the walk-in customer service centres mentioned that the absence of bilingual signs prevented them from identifying bilingual employees and discouraged them from requesting service in French. They added that even in provincial or federal institutions, where guidelines on the active offer of French services were followed, if the French service delivery was too slow or of poor quality, most Francophones, being bilingual, would choose to use the English service, which contributed to a low usage rate of French service.

Lack of French recreation programs/Poor program quality and accessibility

Recreation was another service area identified by all groups as lacking French services or with limited availability. Participants noted that the lack of French recreation programs prevented Acadian and Francophone youth from living in their language after school and outside their home. They also commented that the minimal French leisure activities available were often scheduled at times and locations not convenient or accessible for parents resulting in low participation rates. According to them, programs advertised as bilingual often end up being delivered in English due to participants being predominantly English-speaking. Having the program catalogues only available in English prevents French language groups from being informed and participating.

"We speak two languages at home, but it is very important for me to expose my children to the French language outside of the school. We have a French-speaking doctor, a French-speaking dentist and I am constantly looking for recreation programs in French, and there is absolutely nothing offered by the municipality."

« On parle les deux langues à la maison, mais il est très important pour moi d'exposer mes enfants à la langue française en dehors de l'école. J'ai un médecin francophone, un dentiste francophone et je cherche constamment des loisirs en français et il n'y a absolument rien qui est offert par la municipalité. »

Lack of French services at Halifax Transit and Public Libraries

Other barriers raised by some participants included the absence of French announcements through the Halifax Transit Departures Line and the limited selection of French books at municipal libraries.

Addressing Barriers

Municipal policy on French-language services

The creation of a municipal policy or by-law that sets standards for French-language service delivery was considered of fundamental importance across the groups. Participants agreed that it is the only way to guarantee sustainable financial and human resources dedicated to French services within the municipality.

“[...] it seems fundamental to me that if the City wishes to offer services in French, it must implement its intentions with a new municipal by-law. I invite you to consider what would be the status of French-language education in the province if the Education Act did not allow the creation of a school board for French as a first language education. Consider also the provincial law on French services and the improvement of French services offered by the province since the implementation of the regulations in 2006. [...] It is obvious to me that if the Council is serious, it must state its intentions clearly and have a new mandate in the form of a regulation and the public can hold it accountable for that mandate.”

« [...] il me semble fondamental que, si la Ville souhaite offrir des services en français, elle doit solidifier ses intentions avec un nouveau règlement municipal. Je vous invite à considérer ce que serait le statut de l'éducation en français dans la province si la loi sur l'éducation ne permettait pas la création d'un conseil scolaire français, langue première. Considérons également la loi provinciale sur les services français et l'amélioration des offres de services en français par la province depuis que ses règlements ont été mis en œuvre en 2006. [...] Il me semble évident que si le Conseil est sérieux, il doit énoncer clairement ses intentions et se doter d'un nouveau mandat en forme de règlement et que le public puisse le tenir responsable pour répondre à ce mandat. »

Implementation of French services in priority service areas

Focus groups identified the main service areas where French-language services should be implemented, with services related to residents' safety and security (911, Fire, and emergency) as primary sectors and those dealing with residents' daily routine (311, transit, solid waste, recreation programs, public libraries, construction permits, parking information) as secondary sectors. According to the survey, the top five areas where the participants wished to receive French services were: Parks and Recreation (82%), 311 service (56%), Halifax Regional Police (51%), Fire and Emergency (41%) and Human Resources (41%).

Partnership with the community

All groups asserted that the municipality could achieve more efficient service delivery and promotion as well as a stronger sense of community by taking a leadership role in creating partnerships with and among the local Acadian and Francophone community organizations. Regular information sessions on French services and programs at community organizations was mentioned as a means for service promotion.

Visual identification program

According to the focus groups, making French services more visible and accessible by identifying bilingual staff and French service points was crucial to encourage French-speaking residents to use French services. See page 11 for detailed suggestions on a visual identification program.

Business unit specific suggestions

- **911:** All participants agreed that the 911 dispatching service should be bilingual and the French service option should be indicated in the initial menu.
- **311 call center:** Participants suggested that the initial menu of the 311 service should suggest, in French, the option of French-language services to encourage residents to use the French service which is already available.
- **Recreation programming:** improvement of municipal recreation programs was the most discussed subject across all focus groups. Participants offered suggestions regarding program design, delivery, and promotion.
 - ✓ Program design: All groups agreed that the municipality should increase French and bilingual recreation programs and ensure that the French programs are of equal quality to the English ones. Participants pointed out that separate French programs were necessary as most bilingual programs ended up being offered in English due to the prominence of English-speaking participants. Suggested French programs included French summer camps and French versions of the most popular English activities such as mini-basketball, mini-soccer, drawing, dancing, and swimming classes. One participant suggested creating an online survey page to collect feedback from the community regarding their interests for potential French recreation programs so that the municipality can offer programs accordingly.
 - ✓ Program promotion: To make the *Recreation Catalogue* more user-friendly, participants suggested to either mark all the French programs with an easily distinguishable French logo such as the Acadian flag, or to group all the French activities under one single section. This suggestion would apply to the redesign of the registration system as well. They also noted that for the promotion of French activities, it was helpful to target not only the students in French schools but also the students in immersion programs as well as military families. Important networks that could be used are the networks of *CSAP*, *Canadian Parents for French* and *Centre des ressources des familles militaires*.
 - ✓ Program delivery: Many participants from community organizations proposed collaborating with the municipality to share resources and networks to implement cost-neutral French programs and activities. Participants also stated that hiring bilingual youth for such programs would be beneficial for both the community and the municipality.

Regional Council Representation

Barriers

No Municipal Councillor representing the Acadian and Francophone community

Participants indicated that since there was not representation of their community in Regional Council, the community had lost trust towards the municipal government as well as the interest in being involved or engaged in municipal issues. They mentioned that there was no candidate in the recent municipal elections that could speak French and the questionnaire sent by the *Conseil communautaire du Grand-Havre* to all candidates to gather information on municipal elections received almost no response, which demonstrated an overall lack of interest and recognition from Regional Council towards the Francophone population.

Addressing Barriers

Designated seat on Regional Council

The majority of participants agreed that within Regional Council there should be a designated seat for an Acadian or a Francophone member. During elections, a French-speaking individual would have the choice between voting for their Francophone representative or the municipal councillor of their district. Many participants mentioned that a designated seat on Regional Council for an Acadian or a Francophone was essential to ensure equal representation and to defend the interest of the community.

Awareness raising program for municipal councillors

Participants recommended that the municipality needed to establish an awareness-training program for all municipal councillors to develop their knowledge about the Acadian and Francophone community.

Acadians/Francophones in advisory boards and committees

Some participants suggested that inviting Acadians and Francophones to sit on advisory boards and committees would encourage them be involved in municipal issues and allow them to gain useful experience for running for elections as candidates.

Municipal and CSAP Elections

Barriers

Language barrier

Participants stated that there were no communication materials in French to inform the community about the election process. The ballots and the mailed invitations were only in English. Employees and volunteers working for elections did not have the capacity to speak French. Due to the complexity of the legislation, Francophones found it difficult to understand the general election information. More specifically, participants voiced concerns around the ineffective promotion practices for the election of the CSAP, which influenced negatively the number of voters.

“When I mentioned that I wanted to vote for the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, from this moment forward, all communications and my entire experience were entirely in English with the person working at the voting station.”

« Lorsque j’ai identifié que je voulais voter pour le conseil scolaire francophone, à partir de ce moment, toute la communication et mon expérience était entièrement en anglais avec la personne travaillant au scrutin de vote. »

Technical issues

In 2016, citizens had the possibility to vote online, however many participants in the focus group discussions mentioned that the process to vote online in French did not work. Many technical difficulties occurred when the participants tried to vote on the Halifax website.

Addressing Barriers

Communication process improvement

- **Information sessions in French & bilingual communication materials:** Throughout the discussions, participants suggested that prior to and during elections, French information sessions should be held to inform the community on related legislations and processes. All communication materials should be bilingual. It is especially necessary for the school board election of CSAP.
- **Bilingual volunteers:** Participants suggested that the municipality should reach students from CSAP schools and French Immersion Programs to recruit more bilingual volunteers working for the elections.
- **Partnership with community organizations for promotion:** According to the focus groups, partnerships with French community organizations are essential to distribute the information about the elections. French media is especially an excellent resource to reach the community.
- **Identification of French-speaking candidates:** Some participants suggested that the municipality identify candidates who can speak French and collaborate with community

organizations to create networking events for French-speaking candidates and the Francophone population.

Youth engagement

The focus groups recommended the creation of a youth council in the municipality to increase youth engagement and knowledge about municipal government. They also suggested hosting events, activities, simulations and mock debates to develop youth interest regarding politics. A participant also proposed the possibility of youth visiting Halifax City Hall. It was also suggested that there should be an opportunity to create programs or workshops about municipal government for the CSAP schools. Grade 4-5-6 are the ideal audience for activities and programs about the municipal government.

“The schools have in their curriculum the teaching of the municipal government; it would be interesting if there were an information package in French so that the CSAP schools can also teach the program.”

« Les écoles ont dans leur curriculum l'enseignement du gouvernement municipal, alors s'il y avait une trousse d'information créée en français pour que les écoles puissent enseigner le programme. »

“The city should prepare an information package about the municipal government for schools; currently there is no translation for the French schools.”

« Préparer des informations sur le gouvernement municipal pour informer les écoles, aucune traduction n'est faite pour les écoles francophones. »

Employment

Barriers

Lack of French-speaking/bilingual positions and bilingual job postings

The primary barrier for Acadians and Francophones seeking employment in the municipality, identified by all groups, was the fact that the municipality does not offer employment opportunities for French-speaking only persons and bilingual positions. In addition, summer jobs for students are only posted online in English, there are no bilingual youth opportunities and the municipality does not reach out to community organizations for promotion.

Lack of accessible job application system

The complexity and occasional technical issues of the online application system were also raised as an obstacle for community members seeking employment within the municipality.

"To apply for the City, it is still a rather challenging process. Sometimes some people could be discouraged easily. [...] it is done online only. There is no instruction. If it does not work, it will not work."

« Pour appliquer pour la Ville, c'est quand même un processus assez ardu. Des fois, il y a des gens qui pourraient être découragés facilement. [...] c'est justement en ligne. Il n'y a pas d'instructions. Si ça ne marche pas, ça ne marche pas. »

Lack of equitable hiring practice

Participants questioned the municipality's hiring practice, which they felt resulted in Acadians and Francophones being underrepresented in the workforce. Based on their previous experience, participants speculated that during the selection process in general, Francophone candidates would be less favored compared to candidates whose primary language is English, even if they have the same qualifications, as the hiring panel would assume that an English speaker would have a better overall performance in an English-speaking environment. They indicated that the Acadian and Francophone community should be added to the designated groups in job postings.

"Most jobs say 'we encourage applications from qualified African Nova Scotians, racially visible persons, women in non-traditional positions, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal persons'. There is nothing mentioned about Acadians and Francophones."

« La plupart d'emplois disent : 'we encourage applications from qualified African Nova Scotians, racially visible persons, women in non-traditional positions, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal persons', et cela ne mentionne jamais rien au sujet des Acadiens et des francophones. »

“If you have a candidate who did French immersion from primary to Grade 12, his or her mother tongue is English, and another candidate who went to a French school from primary to Grade 12, the person who examines all this from the perspective of the City, we are under the impression that, maybe we are wrong, that this person will value the candidate from French immersion more, because he or she would imagine that this person would have an overall better performance in everything the City wishes for, without recognizing that someone, even if his/her mother tongue is not English, can be as competent as the other candidate.”

« Si on a un candidat qui a fait l’immersion de la maternelle à la douzième année, sa langue maternelle est l’anglais, et un autre candidat qui a fait le français de la maternelle à la douzième année, la personne qui va regarder cela du côté de la Ville, on a l’impression, peut-être on se trompe, que cette personne-là va valoriser le candidat d’immersion plus, parce qu’il va s’imaginer que la personne va mieux performer dans l’ensemble de tout ce que la Ville veut, sans reconnaître que quelqu’un, même si leur langue maternelle n’est pas l’anglais, peut être aussi compétent que l’autre personne. »

Lack of recognition of bilingual competency in the workplace

Several groups indicated the phenomenon of “hidden bilingual employees” in the workplace: bilingual employees tend to avoid self-identification because they fear that if they self-identified as bilingual, they would become the translator and interpreter for the team, whereas the extra workload related to translation and interpretation is not compensated. Participants suggested encouraging bilingual employees to self-identify by creating an award or recognition program.

"There are many positions which say 'French is an asset.' [...] The employee speaks English, but he/she actually hides the fact that he/she speaks French and does not want others to know that. Because otherwise, he/she will have a doubled workload with the same salary. Unless we stop saying 'French is an asset.' If it is a bilingual position, it is bilingual."

« Il y a beaucoup de postes qui sont décrits comme Le français est un atout. [...] La personne employée est anglophone, mais elle se cache parce qu'elle ne veut pas qu'on sache qu'elle parle français. Sinon, elle aura le double travail avec le même salaire. Sauf si on arrête de dire 'Le français est un atout'. Si c'est bilingue, c'est bilingue. »

Addressing Barriers

Designated bilingual positions

Participants emphasized the importance of having certain positions designated as bilingual in order to satisfy the service needs identified by the community and attract community members

to join the municipal workforce. All groups believed that it is crucial to review municipal positions to determine language competency requirements.

- Participants across groups agreed that bilingual positions should be created in the designated priority service areas where French services need to be implemented (911 and 311 operators, school response officers, recreation program facilitators, etc.).
- It was also recommended that permanent positions dedicated to French-language services should be created to maintain consistency and sustainability of the services. Participants voiced the need for permanent bilingual positions for management, internal service coordination and community liaison.

“This year is the first time that I sense some openness from the municipality towards the community; they have hired two employees to work on French language services, however, what the community really needs is for your positions to become permanent.”

« Cette année j’ai senti pour la première fois une ouverture de la municipalité envers la communauté, ils ont engagé deux employés pour les services en français, mais ce qu’on aimerait vraiment voir c’est que vos deux postes deviennent permanents. »

- Some participants suggested that the statement “*French is an asset*” or a more general statement “*Another language is an asset*” should be included in postings for all positions that interact with the public.
- It was noted that creating internships and short-term employment opportunities for bilingual new graduates would encourage youth from the community to join the municipal workforce.

More effective promotion practices

Developing strong and meaningful partnerships between the municipality and community organizations was raised again to ensure effective promotion of employment opportunities within the community. The following practices were suggested:

- Create bilingual job postings, especially for bilingual positions.
- Distribute job postings for students through French schools and general job postings through community organizations.
- Create connections between *Halifax Partnership* and *Chambre de commerce francophone*.
- Create French information sessions to educate French-speaking youth on career prospective in the municipality

Equitable hiring and awareness raising

How to ensure equitable hiring practice for Acadian and Francophone applicants was an issue discussed at length by all groups. All participants agreed that the municipal hiring process should consider the following:

- For all positions where French is either an asset or a requirement, the selection board should use a point system (similar to the provincial system) which gives points to candidates who demonstrate French language competency in the screening process. A French language assessment should be completed to determine the candidates' French competency in the selection process.

“There are many partnerships between the Province and the City. You have access to human resource documents and processes of the Province. For the provincial government, if there is a position designated as bilingual or a position where French is an asset, the sheet we use for screening and selection indicates how many points are given to those who demonstrate the language skills. The same scoring system also exists in the interview form. You do not have to reinvent everything to do this.”

« Beaucoup de partenariats se font entre la Province et la Ville. Vous avez accès aux documents et aux manières de faire en ressources humaines de la Province. Pour la province, s'il y a un poste désigné comme bilingue ou un poste où le français est un atout, la fiche qu'on utilise pour sélectionner offre les points à accorder dans le système de pointage aux personnes qui peuvent démontrer des compétences langagières. Aussi dans le formulaire d'entrevue, c'est aussi spécifié dans le pointage-là. Vous n'avez pas à réinventer la roue pour ce faire. »

- For bilingual positions, the level of both official languages should be assessed.
- For positions without any language competency requirement, candidates should be offered the option to complete tests and interviews in their official language of choice.

“If it is for a position where the language skills are not really important, if we are hiring a student to clean the down-town, he/she does not need to communicate, why can't we offer interviews in French? For a Francophone student whose English is not very good, he/she will not perform well during an (English) interview. [...] It is the same for newcomers. If it is a position where language skills are not important, offer applicants the opportunity to complete tests and interviews in French or at least, educate the interview panel that someone who does not perform well in an English interview is not necessarily less competent.”

« Si c'est pour un poste où la langue n'est pas vraiment importante, si on embauche un étudiant pour aller au centre-ville à passer le balaie, et on n'a pas besoin de communiquer, est-ce qu'on ne peut pas trouver des moyens pour offrir des entrevues en français? Pour un étudiant francophone dont l'anglais n'est peut-être pas extraordinaire, il ne va pas bien performer dans l'entrevue (en anglais). [...] C'est la même chose pour les nouveaux arrivants. [...] Si c'est un poste où la langue n'est pas très importante, offrir aux postulants l'occasion de passer les tests et les entrevues en français ou au moins, sensibiliser les gens qui passent les entrevues qu'une personne qui ne performe pas bien dans une entrevue en anglais, cela ne veut pas dire que cette personne-là n'est pas compétent. »

- It is also important to raise the awareness in the Human Resources department on equitable hiring practice for the Acadian and Francophone community. Ultimately, Francophones should be invited to sit on the selection panel to ensure equitable hiring.

“It is important to have someone who is Francophone in the Human resources department. [...] A Francophone must be involved in the hiring process. Whether it is a full-time employee from Human resources or someone who is called upon to ensure that the hiring practice is equitable.”

« C'est important d'avoir dans les Ressources humaines quelqu'un qui est francophone. [...] Il faut qu'une personne francophone participe à l'embauche. Que ce soit une personne à temps plein aux Ressources humaines, ou quelqu'un à qui on fait appel pour s'assurer que ce soit équitable. »

Self-identification data collection system

The groups identified that the municipality needed to establish a data collection system and a directory of all French-speaking employees within the organization. The data collection system would be used to identify the number of French-speaking employees at the municipality and would be useful to collect information about where the bilingual staff is working in the organization. This process would facilitate the implementation of French-language services where there is a need. Also, this data would allow the municipality to increase their knowledge about which departments have a sufficient number of bilingual employees and which departments have a lack of French-speaking individuals.

Support for employees

Groups also suggested that the municipality provide additional support to maintain a workforce with an equitable representation of the community and an adequate bilingual capacity to serve the community:

- Follow the Census statistics to ensure an equitable representation of the community in the workforce.
- Offer “focused language training” to staff who hold positions where French is an asset or a requirement. That is, provide short-term tailored French training solely focusing on the language skills required to perform the routine work tasks related to the position.

“You should offer people in many services what I call ‘focused language training’. For example, in Switzerland with three official languages, you are not going to be hired even to sell postage stamps if you do not speak German, Italian, French and probably English. But how much of those languages do you really need to know to be able to answer someone who says: ‘Je veux un timbre.’ (I need a stamp.) Not much. [...] That is never being done enough in Canada. [...] You are never going to be bilingual; it takes a long time to be bilingual. [...] Focused language training should exist for quite a number of services, recreation programs and tourism for instance.”

- Reward bilingual employees for promoting bilingualism and/or performing excellent French-service delivery in the workplace.
- Create a corporate culture that values bilingualism from a visual perspective: use bilingual business cards, letterheads, email signatures, etc.

Appendices

French-Language Services Survey

Questionnaire design and survey administration

The survey was developed by the French Services Project Coordinator and the Liaison Intern, in consultation with the Manager of the Diversity and Inclusion Office. The questionnaire was available in both official languages and included questions on municipal services and programs as well as communication practices.

Paper surveys were distributed to all participants following each focus group discussion. A total of 39 surveys were completed and collected.

Profile of respondents

The surveys reveal that 87 % of the participants have French as a first language and 10% have an advanced level of French. This data confirms that we have reached the right audience with the focus group discussions.

Based on our survey's results, the majority of the participants live in the following areas:

- Dartmouth Centre: 15 %
- Halifax Peninsula North: 15 %
- Cole Harbour – Westphal: 13%
- Halifax South Downtown: 13 %
- Halifax West Armdale: 13 %
- Halifax - Bedford Basin West: 8 %

Results

French-language services

The majority of the respondents (88%) believed that the number of services and programs offered in French by the municipality were insufficient or non-existent. The rest of the participants (10%) did not know that any services in French were available.

In the last 12 months, only 23 % of the participants had any contact either in-person, by telephone, in writing, by email/website, or by fax with a municipal employee to request a French-language service. Most of the respondents (77%) did not request French language services from the municipality.

In the past year, 5 % of the participants used the 311 service in French, and 5 % participated in a recreation program in French offered by the municipality. The majority of the focus group participants (72%) had never used services or participated in programs offered in French by the municipality.

The satisfaction level of the respondents regarding their most recent experience requesting or using the French-language services offered by the municipality was mostly dissatisfied (13%) and very dissatisfied (13%). Half of the participants (49 %) did not know that services in French were available or did not request it.

Communication channels

The preferred channel for the respondents to request a French-language services or information is through the Halifax website (72%). The participants also selected email (46%) and in-person (36%) channels as essential to obtain French-language Services.

Service accessibility

When asked to evaluate on a scale of 1 to 5 the ease of accessing any municipal services or programs in French (5 being the easiest and 1 being the most difficult), the majority (72%) of the respondents answered 1. Among the top factors that hinder the access to municipal services and programs for the community are: lack of knowledge of where to find the information, no French communication materials, no French-speaking employees to inform the community, practically non-existent French services and programs, lack of visibility for French services, disconnect between the municipality and the community.

Priority French service areas

The top six municipal business units where the respondents wished to receive French services are:

1. Parks and Recreation (Recreation programs) (82%)
2. Halifax Publics Libraries (74%)
3. 311 services (56%)
4. Halifax Regional Police (51%)
5. Fire and Emergency (41%)
6. Human Resources (41%)

When asked for the top three types of French services that should be implemented by the municipality, more respondents mentioned translation services than any other issue (85%). They believed that all the information on the website for residents (about permits, taxes, waste, elections...) should be translated into French; 74% stated that all public-facing communication materials produced by the city should be bilingual. This was followed by bilingual student summer jobs (51%) and bilingual signage in HRM (49%).

Preferred French recreation programs

Here are the types of activities that the respondents would like to access in French: (in order of preference)

1. Fitness classes (51%)

2. Theatre (49%)
3. Swimming lessons (46%)
4. Book club (41%)
5. Summer camp (41%)
6. Cooking class (39%)
7. Dance class (36%)
8. Arts and craft (33%)
9. Health and wellness workshops (33%)
10. Photography (31%)
11. Storytelling, puppet show (28%)
12. Programs for preschoolers (27%)
13. Improvisation (26%)

The libraries that the respondents are most likely to visit and participate in their programs are: (in order of preference)

1. Halifax Central Library (51%)
2. Keshen Goodman (33%)
3. Bedford (27%)
4. Alderney Gate (21%)
5. Cole Harbour (18%)
6. Woodlawn (18%)

French-Language Services Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY ABOUT THE QUALITY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OFFERED IN FRENCH BY THE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality is interested in your opinion and recommendations about programs and services offered in French. Therefore, the municipality is asking for your feedback on the types of services and programs that you would like to have. The municipality wants to offer high-quality services and diversified programs to its residents. The municipality recognises the importance of diversity and inclusion of different Francophone cultural groups. Help us improve our French services.

The results of the survey will be completely confidential, they will be used to improve and upgrade the quality of programs and services offered by the municipality. The recommendations and the feedback are anonymous. If you have any question, don't hesitate to contact the Acadian and Francophone Community Liaison Intern.

1. Level of French
 - First language
 - Advance level
 - Medium level
 - Beginner
 - No knowledge of the language

2. I live in
 - Waverley - Fall River - Musquodoboit Valley
 - Preston - Chezzetcook - Eastern Shore
 - Dartmouth South - Eastern Passage
 - Cole Harbour - Westphal
 - Dartmouth Centre
 - Harbourview - Burnside - Dartmouth East
 - Halifax South Downtown
 - Halifax Peninsula North
 - Halifax West Armdale
 - Halifax - Bedford Basin West
 - Spryfield - Sambro Loop - Prospect Road
 - Timberlea - Beechville - Clayton Park - Wedgewood
 - Hammonds Plains - St. Margarets
 - Middle/Upper Sackville - Beaver Bank - Lucasville
 - Lower Sackville
 - Bedford - Wentworth

3. I feel that the number of services and programs in French in the Halifax Regional Municipality is:
 - Sufficient
 - Insufficient

- Non-existent
 - I don't know
4. Have you had any contact either in-person, telephone, in writing, email/website, or by fax with a municipal employee to request a French-language service over the last 12 months?
- Yes
 - No
5. What is the most frequent French-language service that you have used in the past year?
- Communicate with a 311 Citizen Contact Centre in French
 - File an incident report in French to the Halifax Regional Police
 - Attend a recreation program in French offered by Parks and Recreation
 - Others (please specify):
 - I have never used any.
6. How satisfied were you with your most recent experience requesting or using the French-language service offered by the municipality?
- Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Very Dissatisfied
 - No opinion
7. What is your preferred channel to request a French-language service or information from the municipality?
- Phone
 - Email
 - Online through Halifax.ca
 - In-person
 - Mail
8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the easiness in accessing any municipal services or participating in any municipal recreation programs in French (5 being the easiest and 1 being the most difficult)?
- 5
 - 4
 - 3
 - 2
 - 1

9. List the main factors which would hinder your access to municipal services or municipal recreation programs in French?

10. I would like to receive more French-language services from (Choose the top 3 units):

- 311 Municipal Services and Information
- Halifax Regional Police Services
- Fire and Emergency
- Public Libraries
- Community and Recreation Centres
- Halifax Transit
- Taxation Department
- Halifax Water
- Planning and Development Services
- Human Resources
- Others:

11. Types of services that you want in French:

- Information in French on the website (about permits, taxes, waste, elections...)
- Communication materials for public (Notices, forms, brochures, schedules, etc.)
- Bilingual student summer jobs
- Signage in both official languages
- Public consultations in French
- Others (please specify):

12. Types of activities that I or my children would like to do in French:

- Storytelling, puppet show
- Programs for preschoolers
- Theatre
- Improvisation
- Book club
- Arts & crafts
- Photography
- Dance classes
- Swimming lessons
- Summer camp French immersion
- Basic French courses
- Intermediate French courses

- French courses for professionals
- Business creation and management training
- Job search and resume writing workshops
- Health and wellness workshops
- Cooking classes
- Fitness classes
- Conversation groups
- Others (please specify):

13. If there were programs offered through our partner, the Halifax Public Libraries, which library would you go to?

- Alderney Gate
- Bedford
- Captain William Spry
- Cole Harbour
- Dartmouth North
- Halifax Central Library
- Halifax North Memorial
- J.D. Shatford Memorial
- Keshen Goodman
- Musquodoboit Harbour
- Sackville
- Sheet Harbour
- Tantallon
- Woodlawn

14. Do you have any comments or recommendations about the programs and services offered in French by the municipality?

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to the HRM Liaison Intern Élisabeth Houle houlee@halifax.ca T : 902- 579-0354

Focus Group Agenda

Acadian and Francophone Community Consultation

Focus Group Agenda

Time	Activities and Questions	Roles	Materials
15 min	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitators welcome and introduce themselves - Give context and overview of the topic - Review objectives and ground rules - Sign Focus Group Agreement - explain the process - Start recording - Participant introductions (name, life experience, motivations, expectations) 	 M M M AM M AM M	FAQ Focus Group Agreement PowerPoint: topics
15 min	Topic 1: Communication	M	PowerPoint&Flipchart (Questions 1-4)
15 min	Topic 2: Services (including recreation programs)	M	PowerPoint&Flipchart (Questions 5-8)
15 min	Topic 3: Elections	M	PowerPoint&Flipchart (Questions 9-12)
15 min	Topic 4: Employment	M	PowerPoint&Flipchart (Questions 13-16)
15min	Wrap-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last question: <i><u>Is there anything you would like to add or ask?</u></i> - Summarize the main points and emphasize how they are contributing to change and close - Distribute survey questionnaires and evaluation forms 	 M M AM	Survey questionnaires Evaluation forms

*M=Moderator; AM=Assistant Moderator

Focus Group Questions:

Structure: Barriers + Suggestions

1 Communication:

- 1) **Barriers:** In your opinion, what gets in the way of the Acadian and Francophone community (French speaking citizens in general) obtaining information from the Halifax Regional Municipality? Are there any specific barriers for Acadian and Francophone community communicating with the City Council?
- 2) **Suggestions:** What do you think could be done by the municipality to improve its communication with the Acadian and Francophone community? Should these practices be carried out by the community or by the municipality, or both in partnership?

2 Services (311, Garbage & recycling, public transit, building & renovation, construction, taxes, streets & parking, fire, police, recreation programs and civic events):

- 3) **Barriers:** What gets in the way of the Acadian and Francophone community using the municipal services? (311, Garbage & recycling, public transit, building & renovation, construction, taxes, streets & parking, fire, police, recreation programs and civic events)
* If possible, talk about your experience using the 311 service offered in French.
- 4) **Suggestions:** What do you think could be done by the municipality to offer better services to the Acadian and Francophone community? Should these practices be carried out by the community or by the municipality, or both in partnership?
* What do you think are the priority services which should be offered in French?

3 Elections:

- 5) **Barriers:** Are there specific barriers for Acadian and Francophone community participating in the municipal and/or school board elections, either as candidates or as voters?
- 6) **Suggestions:** What do you think could be done by the municipality to promote the participation of the Acadian and Francophone community in municipal and school board elections? Should these practices be carried out by the community or by the municipality, or both in partnership?

4 Employment:

- 7) **Barriers:** Are there specific barriers for Acadian and Francophone people, especially the youth seeking employment in the HRM?
- 8) **Suggestions:** What do you think could be done by the municipality to promote the presence of the Acadian and Francophone community in the workforce of the HRM? Should these practices be carried out by the community or by the municipality, or both in partnership?

List of Acadian and Francophone Community Organisations in HRM

Name of organization	Expertise	Contact	Title	Phone number	Email	Website
School Boards and Higher Education						
CSAP	French school board	Michel Comeau	Executive director	(902) 769-5457	comeaum@csap.ca	http://www.csap.ednet.ns.ca/
CSAP	French school board	Jerry Thibeau	Executive director, central region	(902) 433-7046	tjerry@csap.ca	http://www.csap.ednet.ns.ca/
CSAP	French school board	Juliana Barnard	Community and school development	(902) 890-1177	barnardj@csap.ca	http://www.csap.ednet.ns.ca/
Halifax Regional School Board	English school board	Timothy A. Brown	Coordinator for the immersion programs	(902) 464-2000 ext.4432	tbrown@hrsbc.ca	http://www.hrsbc.ca/
Université Sainte-Anne	French university	Daniel Lamy	Director Halifax campus	(902) 769-2114	daniel.lamy@usainteanne.ca	https://www.usainteanne.ca/
Cultural Organizations						
Fédération culturelle acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Cultural centre	Daniel Thériault	Executive director	(902) 466-1610	dg@fecane.ca	http://fecane.ca/index.php
Alliance Française	French-language training and cultural centre	Isabelle Pédot	Executive director	(902) 455-4411	isabelle.pedot@afhalifax.ca	http://www.afhalifax.ca/
Conseil communautaire du Grand-Havre	Community Centre	Lisa Michaud	Executive director	(902) 435-3244	gestion@ccgh.ca	http://www.ccgh.ca/
Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Organization spokesperson for the community	Marie-Claude Rioux	Executive director	(902) 433-0065	dg@federationacadienne.ca	http://www.acadiene.ca/
Career Services and Business						
Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Not-for-profit organization dedicated to the economic advancement of the Acadian and Francophone community.	Julie Oliver	Executive director	1 (866)-552-3363	info@cdene.ns.ca	http://cdene.ns.ca/en/
Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Promote women's rights and provides support to women who are business owners.	Micheline Gélinas	Executive director	(902) 433-2088	dg@femmesacadiennes.ca	http://www.ffane.ca/Accueil
Direction emploi, YMCA	Career Services Centre	Nancy Hayes	French language services	(902) 461-2513 ext.222	nancy_hayes@ymca.ca	http://ymca.ca/

Parent Support and Child Development						
Canadian Parents for French	Furthering bilingualism by promoting and creating opportunities for students to learn and use French.	Rebecca Lancaster	Executive director	(902) 453-2048	cpfexec@ns.sympatico.ca	http://ns.cpf.ca/
Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Support parents and parents' associations	Pierre Lebreton	Executive director	(902) 580-0712	dg@fpane.org	http://www.fpane.org/fr/
Centre des ressources des familles militaires	Strengthen the well-being of all those who share the unique experience of military life.	Andrée Jacques	Francophone and information services	(902) 720-2113	Andree.Jacques@forces.gc.ca	http://www.halifaxmfr.ca/
La pirouette	Family resource and services center	Karine Lahaie	Regional coordinator	(902) 832-3785	pirouettehfx@cprps.ca	http://www.lapirouette.ca/
Le petit voilier	French daycare	Jane Williamson	Executive director	(902) 435-9177	info@petitvoilier.ca	http://www.petitvoilier.ca/
Youth Organization						
Conseil jeunesse provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Foster the development of youth through its activities, meetings and campaigns	Ana Pranjic	Executive Director	(902) 433-2084	direction@cjpne.ns.ca	https://www.facebook.com/pg/Boomdanstaface/about/?ref=page_internal
Senior Organization						
Regroupement des aînés de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Represent, gather and engage Acadians over 50 in Nova Scotia	Véronique Legault	Executive director	(902) 433-0860	dg@rane.ns.ca	http://rane.ns.ca/
Immigration Services						
Immigration francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Immigration services	Emmanuel Nahimana	Executive director	(902) 433-2099	Enahimana@immigrationfrancophonene.ca	http://www.immigrationfrancophonene.ca/
Health Services						

Réseau Santé	Promote and improve access to quality health and wellness services in French.	Jeanne-Françoise Caillaud	Executive director	(902) 222-5871	reseau@reseausantene.ca	http://www.reseausantene.ca/
Legal Services						
Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Legal services in French	Nicholas LeBlanc	Executive director	(902) 433-2085	juristes@ajefne.ns.ca ; 902-433-2085	http://www.ajefne.ns.ca/
French Media						
Radio-Canada	French media	Stéphane Côté	Journalist	(902) 420-4359	stephane.cote@radio-canada.ca	http://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/le-reveil-nouvelle-ecosse-et-t-n
Oui 98.5 FM	Community radio station	Souhaël Bouallagui	Journalist	(902) 490-2574	info@oui98.ca	http://www.oui98.ca/
Le Franco	Community newspaper	Victor Tétrault	Editor		lotofrancohalifax@ccgh.ca	http://www.francohalifax.ca/
Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse	Provincial French newspaper	Francis Robichaud	Journalist	(902)769-3078	administration@lecourrier.com	http://lecourrier.com/

French-Language Services Internal Assessment

**An internal assessment of French services and bilingual
capacity at Halifax Regional Municipality**

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19/12/19

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Executive Summary

In the spring of 2017, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion led four focus group discussions with Acadian and Francophone community members to identify existing barriers and collect suggestions for addressing barriers in municipal service areas including communication, municipal services and programs, representation and elections, as well as employment. The findings indicated participants' dissatisfaction with the limited number of municipal services offered in French, their poor quality and accessibility, the lack of French communication materials, as well as the disconnect between the municipality and the community. In June 2018, a permanent French Language Services Advisor was hired by the Municipality to address the barriers identified by the community accessing municipal services, programs and information. The French services advisor is tasked with the development of a corporate French-language services strategy with the hope of collecting baseline data regarding French services as well as aligning strategic objectives with the needs of the community including resources, capacity and business planning. From June to August 2017 and from November 2018 to January 2019, an internal assessment was conducted to collect data and information from each business unit regarding French services in the following 4 aspects:

- Current French-language services offered by business units.
- Current bilingual capacity within the business unit.
- French-language service gaps in terms of service provision, communications and workforce planning.
- Future plans for French-language services planning.

A standard survey questionnaire was distributed to all 11 business units including the Mayor's Office, the Council Support Office and the CAO's Office. Discussions were conducted with coordinators and managers to gather specific information. The initial assessment took place in the summer of 2017 and was interrupted due to staffing changes. Upon the creation of the permanent position of French services advisor in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the project was updated during the winter of 2018. Key findings indicated:

- Apart from 311 service, 911 service, certain police services (patrol and investigation) and prosecution service where French services are guaranteed to be offered upon request, all other business units and divisions offer very limited French services on an ad-hoc basis, through hiring casual and project-based French-speaking individuals, or producing French communication materials when budget permits, or assigning requests made in French to French-speaking staff when they are available. Often, these French-language services are not well promoted and can be perceived as inaccessible by the community.
- No corporate direction has been identified that could guide and plan strategically the development and implementation of French services across business units.
- There is a general lack of recognition of French language skills in the workforce planning: currently, French skills are required for only one permanent position (down from two in 2018) and are considered an asset (often along with all other minority languages) for a few seasonal positions. None of the business unit surveyed planned to

create any English-French bilingual positions. Currently there is no standardized assessment of French language skills in the recruitment process.

- All business units have staff capable of speaking French, with various comfort levels. However, apart from the HRP which has the skill inventory for sworn police officers and the French language certification for Emergency Response Communicators, there is no data collection system in place to identify employees' French skills in the organization. French speaking staff are identified through personal encounters and remain a largely untapped internal resource.
- Many of the coordinators and managers interviewed agreed that front-line staff would benefit from being able to speak a second language (including French). However, due to the work nature of frontline staff, (dispersed location, shift schedule), many of them would not be able to commit to the current on-the-job French training program with a centralized location and a rigid schedule.
- Communication materials in French are produced on an ad-hoc basis by individual business unit within their respective budget. Currently there are no corporate guidelines to standardize the selection of content for translation or the use of translation services.

Based upon the findings, the following recommendations have been identified in the following areas with a few suggested priority actions:

- Corporate strategy: develop a corporate French services strategy
Priority actions:
 - Explore the possibility of creating a corporate policy dealing with French services in the scope of multi-lingual services.
- Internal capacity: strengthen internal capacity and maximize the use of it to offer quality French services
Priority actions:
 - Revise the current French training program to better meet the needs of front-line staff
 - Develop a visual identification program to identify the availability of municipal services offered in French and other languages
- Communication: build partnerships and maintain ongoing communications with the community
Priority actions:
 - Maximize the use of the French micro-site
 - Develop French language/multi-lingual communication guidelines including guidelines on translation services

Background

The 2017 Acadian and Francophone community consultation report identified a lack of understanding of municipal services by the community as well as dissatisfaction of the community regarding the lack of municipal services offered in French. In order to address barriers identified in the discussions, it is important to collect baseline data and information related to French services currently being offered by the municipality. Therefore, an internal assessment was conducted with all business units including the Mayor's Office, the Council Support Office and the CAO's Office.

Objectives

- To assess the current state of French-language services offered by HRM.
- To assess the current bilingual capacity within HRM.
- To collect information regarding service needs and staff requirements for implementing and developing French-language services within each business unit.
- To formulate recommendations for implementing and developing French-language services within HRM.

Scope

A standard survey questionnaire was prepared and distributed to all business units of HRM in order to collect data and information regarding the following 4 aspects of the provision of French-language services:

- Current French-language services offered by business units.
- Current bilingual capacity within the business unit.
- French-language service gaps in terms of service provision, communications and workforce planning.
- French-language services planning.

Following the completion of the survey, discussions were conducted with the coordinators and managers in all business units to collect specifics and understand their approach to supporting French-language services. The assessment period covered July to August 2017 initially and an update was completed from November 2018 to January 2019 to include new French service related initiatives.

Methodology

- Develop and conduct a standard survey with the coordinators of all business units to collect general information around the provision of French-language services.
- Discussion with coordinators and managers in all business units to understand their view of the role of French services in their service area, in their business and workforce planning, as well as the support needed for French service development.

- Review HRM Multi-Year business plans to identify components relevant to supporting French-language services.
- Consult with other Canadian municipalities (English-speaking and bilingual cities) on a limited basis to establish best practices for the provision of French-language services and benchmark the practices of HRM.

Findings

Current state of French-language services

Current available French services

- Mayor, Council and CAO's Office
When it is deemed necessary to have the Mayor's welcome letters in both official languages, the Mayor's Office would work with the French Services Advisor to have the letters translated into French.

As the Liaison to the HRM Acadian/Francophone community, Deputy Mayor Mancini provides a portion of his newsletters in English and in French.

The Councillor of District 2 (where the Acadian community of Chezzetcook is located) provides a portion of his newsletters in English and in French at times.

The current CAO is bilingual (the position is not a bilingual position) and can communicate with French speaking staff and residents in French.

- French language microsite: Halifax.ca/fr
In April 2018, the ICT and the Diversity and Inclusion Office worked together to create a French micro-site (<https://www.halifax.ca/fr>) with a budget shared between the HRM and the Federal Government. This microsite includes around 20 French webpages identified as the most visited webpages by users using a French language browser. This microsite provides an overview of major municipal services, with a focus on existing municipal services available in French, such as the 311 service, bilingual public service announcements, waste sorting guides and applications, directory of local Francophone organizations, etc. It also offers a generic email address that the French Services Advisor monitors to receive feedback and respond to inquiries in French.

- 311 service
Customer Contact Centres (311) utilizes an external service, Language Line, to provide interpreting services in 150 languages, including French. Starting from the first quarter of the fiscal year 2018-19, the interpreting services are also available when residents request language services at a Customer Contact Centre in person. However, emailed requests for 311 services are handled only in English. Customer Contact Centres receive around 1,500 emails per month.

Before the launch of the French micro-site in April 2018, the interpreting services were promoted on the website Halifax.ca and through a promotion flyer, both only available in English. The 311 IVR (Interactive Voice Response) is also in English only: callers must go through the English-only IVR to speak to an agent to request interpreting services and have the Language Line service activated for them.

The lack of promotion materials in non-English languages for the interpreting services and the language barrier for users to navigate the English only IVR contribute to the low usage of the service:

For the 2017/18 fiscal year (to end of September) seven customers utilized the interpreting service; (five Arabic and two French). Through 2016/17, 15 customers requested the service (seven French, five Mandarin, one Arabic, one Nepali and one Romanian¹).

Out of the 28 call centre agents for 311, there is one French-speaking bilingual agent. It is believed that when this agent receives a call in French, they offer French services. But the chance of such a coincidence happening is rather rare.

- **Bilingual PSAs**

In December 2017, Corporate Communications created a Senior Bilingual Communications Advisor, and starting from March 2018, all news releases and Public Service Announcements produced by the municipality are issued in both English and French (<https://www.halifax.ca/home/news>). However, as all PSA entries are hosted on the English site and only show the English title with the English summary, it is very difficult for French speaking users to access the French content. Corporate Communications indicated that Francophone media coverage resulting from the French PSAs has been extremely limited in the first year of the implementation. The bilingual communications advisor position was replaced by an English unilingual position in early 2019. French news releases and PSAs are still being produced and published.

- **Emergency 911 service**

The emergency 911 service is not a municipal service but a provincial service, managed by the provincial Emergency Management Office. The service is delivered through four call centres, including the Integrated Emergency Services (IES) located in Dartmouth which is a division of the Halifax Regional Police. IES call takers are also responsible for taking non-emergency calls and HRM participates in the management of the staff.

Currently there is no provincial policy or regulation that requires the 911 service to be offered in both official languages and no official French services guaranteed for 911 service. In terms of human resources, 911 call takers need to be certified to take calls in French. Apart from the call centre managed by RCMP which, as a federal institution, has certified bilingual call takers, other call centres have minimal bilingual capacity to handle phone calls in French. Currently, calls from the traditionally Francophone areas (Clare, Chéticamp, etc.) are directed first to the RCMP call centre where there are more bilingual agents; while calls from HRM are directed first to the IES, with some bilingual capacity. When all call takers at the initial call centre are busy, the call will be directed to a different call centre. If the call taker does not have the skills to converse in the language spoken by the caller, the external interpreting services, Language Line, will be used.

¹ Multilingual Service Available Policy Report (February 13, 2018)

According to the 911 external interpreting service record, the Language Line was used for only 56 calls across Nova Scotia in both 2016 and 2017 (out of a total of around 180,000 calls annually). French was not the most requested language, with 4 calls in French versus 32 calls in Arabic in 2016 and 6 calls in French versus 33 calls in Arabic in 2017. This figure includes calls made across the province and does not include the calls handled in French by internal 911 agents.

Since there are no French services guaranteed, implementing bilingual greetings would create a false expectation for bilingual services. However, 911 agents are trained to recognize languages other than English, especially French, so that when addressing a French-speaking caller, they could ask the caller to wait for the interpreting services in French.

- Non-emergency services

Non-emergency calls made to 902-490-5020 are also handled by IES staff. It is part of the services offered by HRM through HRP. Call takers do not need to be certified to take non-emergency calls in French and those who have French skills are encouraged to offer French services. Moreover, it is possible to transfer calls made in French from a non-French-speaking agent to a French-speaking agent, if there happens to be one on duty. The same tactic applies to any calls made in a minority language as the IES staff include call takers that speak Mandarin and Tagalog.

The non-emergency services also use Language Line to handle calls made in languages other than English. But there is no record registering the usage rate of the external interpreting services or the solicited languages.

- Other HRP services

- Police patrol services:

Similar to the non-emergency services, the HPR patrol interaction and inspection also offers French services, not officially but rather on an ad-hoc basis. The HRP keeps a spreadsheet with a self-identified skill inventory for all patrol officers, including their competencies in languages other than English. Upon request for services in any language other than English during patrol interactions or inspections related to non-criminal investigations, the process is generally deferred until an internal police officer on shift who can speak the requested language or a certified interpreter from external interpreting services becomes available.

The usage rate of external interpreting services is recorded. According to the statistics provided by HRP, there was not a big demand for external interpreting services, during the fiscal year of 2016-17, there were only 17 calls out for interpreters. There is no record of which specific languages were requested. It was noted that using interpreting services present some challenges, including the time sensitivity, interpreters' availability, the lack of standardization of legal interpreting practices and the lack of quality assurance.

- Public education:
All public education programs are generally delivered in English. But when there are any Francophone school liaison officers available, public education programs are delivered in French at French schools. There is no designated bilingual or Francophone liaison officer position.

- Fire prevention services

In 2018, Fire Prevention staff participated in the “We Speak Translate Training Project” (<http://www.icavictoria.org/community/we-speak-translate/>) and were trained on how to use the Google Translate application to communicate with non-English speakers in their languages, including French. Google translate “We Speak” stickers have been ordered to be put on the side of cars to allow public to recognize staff that have been trained on the application and are actively offering to use it to facilitate communication.

In 2017, Francophone employees from Fire services participated in the local francophone festival Stella. In 2019, Fire services worked with the French Services Advisor to use an external grant to translate in French the *Household Emergency Preparedness Guide*.

- Recreation programs

Aquatics, Inclusion and Oval: 3 Municipal pools (Needham Pool, Captain William Spry Community Centre and Sackville Sports Stadium) have been offering French swimming lessons since 2013-14. Sometimes English speakers register for these lessons and the instructors end up teaching in English. The cancellation rate for French swimming lessons is 40-45%.

Halifax Peninsula: Chocolate Lake Recreation Centre and St. Andrew’s Community Centre offer “Fun with French”, a preschool program introducing children to the French language in a recreational setting. This program is offered all year around. It is noted that although their preschool programs are currently suffering from low registration due to the introduction of the pre-primary programs in local schools, the “Fun with French” program continues to be their most successful weekday morning preschool program.

Dartmouth, Cole Harbour and Eastern Shore: In 2016, following the Mayor’s suggestion about implementing French programs, Findlay Community Centre started to offer French soccer programs 2-3 times per year to 6-8-year-old. The registration rate for Spring 2016 was 6/10. However, in 2018, the program was discontinued due to low registration and interest.

Sackville, Beaverbank, Fall River, Bedford and Musquodobit Valley: A French day camp is usually offered, however, in the summer of 2018, the program was discontinued due to low registration.

Youth Programs: Among the 12 members of the Youth Advisory Committee (<https://www.halifax.ca/city-hall/boards-committees-commissions/s-z/youth-advisory-committee>), one seat is designated for Acadian and Francophone youth.

The recreation programming division has a Diversity and Accessibility Specialist who coordinates the use of translators and interpreters to help parents' registration for municipal recreation programs when needed. But there is no budget designated for interpreting and translation services in the business unit.

Online information and registration system of municipal recreation programs are all solely in English. Since there is no budget designated to translation services, translation of communication materials is offered on an ad-hoc basis when funding becomes available. For example, in 2018, a French flyer presenting all recreational programs offered in French in Winter 2019 was created with an external grant.

- Elections and Regional Council
The Municipal Clerk's Office hires bilingual call centre agents to provide French language services during municipal elections as well as the elections of the French school board *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)*. The availability of French services during elections are shared via word of mouth to CSAP candidates.

The Municipal Clerk's Office worked with the Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs to produce a few communication materials in French, including printed brochures on Regional Council, municipal boards and committees, community councils, public hearing, among others.

- Prosecutions
Legal Services provide French trials through external contractors to those who request them. All court tickets indicate that defendants have the right to a trial in their native language. Upon request, HRM would arrange for a French speaking prosecutor, who is usually contracted externally. The Court might arrange for an interpreter for other language services.
- Planning and development
Planning and development does not provide French services officially but has bilingual employees in each team. Their language capacity is known to their managers. When French-speaking employees are available, ad-hoc French services are provided to answer residents' requests. Various teams from Planning and Development have worked with the French Services Advisor to provide municipal information and services in French and engage the Acadian and Francophone community.

- In 2018-19, the Business Services Program worked with the Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs to revise and update HRM BizPal information, so that information about municipal permits and licenses is available in both official languages on BizPal (<https://www.bizpal.ca/>).
 - In 2018-19, the Project *HalifACT 2050: Acting on Climate Together* worked with the French Services Advisor to engage the Acadian and Francophone community in the public consultation process. Presentations and Pop-ups, with communication materials in French, were implemented to engage the community.
 - In 2018-19, the Project *Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan* worked with the French Services Advisor to engage the Acadian and Francophone community in the public consultation process. A bilingual team member, paired with the French Services Advisor, conducted 6 consultation sessions in French.
- Transit

Halifax Transit sometimes produces ad-hoc communication materials in French. For example, the August 2018 Service Adjustment Booklet was available in 9 languages, including French.
 - Transportation and Public Works

The Solid Waste division publishes education and sorting materials in multiple languages, including French. The waste sorting application “What Goes Where” and the mobile application “Halifax Recycles Application” (<https://www.halifax.ca/home-property/garbage-recycling-green-cart/collection-schedules>) are currently available in English, French and Chinese. The apartment sorting guide and the condo sorting guide (<https://www.halifax.ca/home-property/garbage-recycling-green-cart/recycling/recycling-apartments-condos>), are available in English, French, Arabic, Farsi and Simplified Chinese.

Gaps

Services

Most Business Units stated that they did not receive any request for French services from the community and therefore did not identify any need for French services. However, a few suggestions have been made by coordinators regarding potential French services that could be offered:

- To build and strengthen internal bilingual capacity;
- Strengthen connections and partnerships with the local Acadian and Francophone community;
- Dedicate resources to public engagement and consultations with the community to identify their needs (resources include financial and human resources related to cultural awareness, multi language services and facilitation practices);
- Offer bilingual services and programs where community needs are identified.

Communication

The following communication materials have been identified by coordinators as those that would benefit from being translated into French:

- Printed information from Planning and Development, such as application forms;
- The information about recreation programs and registration processes; translation services are needed on site at recreation centres and by phone to help frontline staff assist parents registering;
- Public facing documents produced by Transit such as Riders' Guide and the Map;
- Public facing documents produced by TPW such as notices for road redesigns and constructions;
- Brochure promoting 311 service;
- Recruitment materials for Fire and Emergency Service, fire prevention and education programs and EMO documents;
- Elections advising materials.

Employment

Most Business Units do not have any potential or planned bilingual positions. However, they all recognize that having employees with bilingual competency present great opportunities for them. A few Business Units have identified the following public facing positions that would benefit from being bilingual:

- Front-line positions at Planning and Development (75% of the work of Planning and Development deals with the public: 311 requests, permits for buildings and constructions, development of buildings, roads and infrastructure);
- Front desk and facility booking staff at Parks and Recreation, program instructors as well as positions of Community Developers and Volunteer Services would benefit from having multi-lingual capacity as an asset (Arabic skills were mentioned multiple times as the language skills the most needed);
- Receptionists and Customer Services Advisors (who respond to inquiries made to 311) at Transit.

Challenges in implementing French services:

- Lack of request for French services from the community (this translates in to the low registration rate for Recreation programs)
- Lack of municipal mandate or policy to ensure a sustainable provision of French services
- Multiple Business Units identified difficulties recruiting English-French bilingual staff: Elections Office recruits bilingual call centre staff to support elections and find them often in high demand and difficult to find. The Recreation Programming Division of Parks and Recreation stated that finding and retaining casual staff is already challenging given the nature of the job and requiring French skills would be an added challenge. The IES of HRP stated that when they recruit CCRTs, very few applicants self-identify as bilingual (Out of 454 applicants during a recruitment in 2018, less than 5% self-identified as bilinguals.). Moreover, English skills are essential to be selected, so applicants whose English skills are not strong enough will be eliminated through the English spelling and reading comprehension tests.
- Lack of funding: there is no budget for using interpretation and translation services at Parks and Recreation; there is a lack of program resources in French for recreation programming; the current budget for using interpretation and translation services at 311 service is relatively small due to the low usage of the service.
- Lack of community connections to recruit bilingual staff.
- Collective Agreement Issues: including a statement such as “French is a requirement” or “French is an asset” would cause collective agreement issues for unionized positions. For HRP, the collective agreement also prevents redeployment based on skill set. However, HRP also suggested that this could be solved through practicing inclusive hiring to have more new employees with diverse backgrounds to perform strategic deployment of new hires.

Recommendations

Next steps

Corporate Strategy:

- Develop a corporate French-Language Services Strategy and an action plan under the umbrella of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework.

Internal Capacity:

- Find innovative and business unit specific ways to maximize the use of internal capacity to offer French services.
- Develop and strengthen internal capacity.

Communication:

- Maintain and develop meaningful partnerships with the community.
- Maintain ongoing communications with the community.

Priority Areas for Moving Forward

Policies:

- Explore ways to creating a corporate policy dealing with French-language services within the scope of multi-lingual services.

French micro-site:

- Explore innovative ways to use the current French micro-site as a major channel to engage and communicate with the Acadian and Francophone community.

Corporate training:

- Revise and redesign the current French language training program to offer flexible and customized training modules that can better meet the needs of front-line staff in different business units.

Visual Identification Program:

- Develop and implement a visual identification program to identify the availability of municipal services in French and other languages.

Translation Services:

- Develop French-language/multi-lingual communication guidelines and supporting tools to standardize the process of using translation services.

Employment:

- Create a pilot project aiming to support the recruitment of seasonal bilingual staff at Parks and Recreation.

Appendices

Current bilingual capacity within HRM

Current permanent bilingual position: 1

- French Services Advisor (since June 2018)

Past permanent bilingual position that no longer exist: 1

- Senior Communications Advisor – bilingual imperative (December 2017-December 2018)

Past temporary bilingual positions: 2

- Acadian and Francophone Community Liaison Intern (bilingual, internship, 2016-2017)
- French Services Project Coordinator (bilingual, term, grant based, 2017)

Positions with bilingualism as an asset: multiple

- 311 Call Centre Agent (bilingualism as an asset)
- Emergency Response Communicator/CCRT (Ability to communicate in a second language is an asset)
- Recreation Program Instructor (Another language as an asset, part-time, casual)

Bilingual employees

- All bilingual skills rely solely on self-identification, apart from the certified bilingual Emergency Response Communicators (CCRT) at Integrated Emergency Services of Halifax Regional Police (HRP).
- No tracking system or data collection system in place to identify bilingual employees in the organisation, apart from the certification of CCRT and the skill inventory established by HRP for sworn police officers with competencies in various minority languages. In all other business units, French skill identification mostly relies on personal encounters.
- Halifax Regional Police: As of July 2017, among the 525 sworn HRP police officers, there were 35 bilingual officers who could speak French. At the Integrated Emergency Services of HRP, out of the 88 call takers who respond to 911 calls and non-emergency calls, 4 were certified bilingual agents and one agent in the process of being certified as of December 2018.
- There are bilingual employees in all other municipal business units. The accurate number and their skill levels are unknown as they are either self-identified or identified through

personal encounters. They do not necessarily occupy public facing positions where their French skills could be used.

- Non-exhaustive bilingual skills survey:
 - Mayor and Regional Council: As of July 2019, 1 out of the 16 Regional Councillors was bilingual and of Acadian origin.
 - Mayor's Office, CAO's Office and Council Support Office: As of December 2018, 2 out of 23 employees self-identified as bilingual
 - Finance, Asset Management and ICT: As of November 2018, 14 out of 191 employees self-identified as bilingual.
 - Human Resources, Office of Diversity and Inclusion: As of July 2019, 2 out of 62 employees self-identified as bilingual.
 - Legal, Municipal Clerk's Office and External Affairs: As of December 2018, 3 out of 72 employees self-identified as bilingual.
 - Planning and Development: According to the Coordinators, there are bilingual employees in every one of the 10 teams. As of August 2017, around 15 out of 191 employees self-identified as bilingual. Managers know bilingual employees in their teams. Residents requesting French services receive them when bilingual employees are available.
 - Parks and Recreation: Within the Recreation Programming Division, all recreation areas stated to have bilingual casual staff. Seasonal staff change every 3-4 months and it is impossible to provide accurate numbers.
 - Halifax Transit: As of December 2018, there were bilingual employees in the Business Unit but no accurate number as the coordinator know them through personal encounters.
 - Transportation and Public Works: As of December 2018, there were bilingual employees in the Business Unit but no accurate number as the coordinator was aware of 4 bilingual employees but was convinced that there were more.
 - Corporate and Customer Services: The survey only covered the 311 service and the Corporate Communication division. As of October 2018, there was one bilingual 311 agent out of a total of 28 agents. There were no other language skills among them. The only bilingual agent has intermediate French level and is proficient to provide French services. None of the 9 customer service representatives at Customer Contact Centres is bilingual. As of January 2019, there were some bilingual employees in the Corporate Communication division with intermediate reading, writing and speaking skills.
 - Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency: The Business Unit does not keep track of language skills of its employees. But the Coordinator is aware of bilingual employees whose first language is French holding various positions. During the Festival Stella 2017, 9 employees self-identified as Francophones and participated in the festival.

French-Language Services Internal Assessment Survey Questionnaire

French-language Services Internal Assessment General Questions for Business Unit Coordinators

Business Unit:

Name of Coordinator:

Telephone number:

Email:

1. Current state of French-language services

- 1) Are there any French services currently available in your business unit?

If yes:

- A. What are the French services offered?
- B. How are these services promoted and used within the Acadian and Francophone community? Any statistics showing the usage of services by the Acadian and Francophone community?
- C. Are these services evaluated and audited?

If yes:

- a) How is the feedback collected?
- b) What is the feedback?
- c) How could the current evaluation system be improved?

2. Current bilingual capacity

- 1) Are there any bilingual employees in your business unit?

If yes:

- A. What are their language levels?
- B. What positions do they occupy?
- C. Do their positions have any language requirements?

If yes, what are the language requirements?

2) Are there any bilingual positions in your business unit?

If yes:

- A. What are the bilingual positions?
- B. What are the language requirements?
- C. Do the incumbents meet the requirements?

3) Are there any potential/planned bilingual positions in your business unit?

If yes:

- A. What are the potential/planned bilingual positions?
- B. What are the language requirements?

3. Gaps

1) Services:

- A. If your business unit already offers some services in French, is there anything that you think could be improved upon? What support would you need for the improvement?
- B. Are there any (other) services that could/should be offered in French by your business unit?

If yes:

- a) What are the priority services that your business unit would like to offer in French?
- b) What gets in the way of your business unit implementing those French services?
- c) What support do you need to implement them?

2) Communications:

- A. When serving the public, does your business unit experience difficulties communicating with the Acadian and Francophone community?

If yes:

- a) What are the barriers?

b) What support do you need to address these barriers?

B. What are the priority communication materials that need to be translated into French?

3) Employment:

A. Has your business unit ever recruited any bilingual individuals?

If yes: what were the challenges and opportunities?

If no: why not?

B. Does your business unit experience/foresee any difficulties creating bilingual positions, filling them and/or retaining bilingual staff?

If yes:

a) What are the major challenges?

b) What support do you need to address these challenges?

4. Next steps

1) Does your business unit have any plans in terms of services, communications and/or employment for improving or implementing French services?

If yes:

A. What are the plans?

B. What support would you need for carrying out the plans?