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## Item No. 3

Halifax Regional Council  
June 14, 2022

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** May 2, 2022

**SUBJECT:** 2021-22 French Language Services Strategy Annual Update

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### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

June 29, 2021 Halifax Regional Council motion:

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Russell

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Adopt the attached French-Language Services Strategy as set out in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated May 3, 2021; 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.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, subsections 7A, 34(1) and 34(3) provide:  
7A The purposes of the Municipality are to (a) provide good government; (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

...

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.

...

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

## **BACKGROUND**

On June 29, 2021, Halifax Regional Council approved the *French-Language Services Strategy* and directed the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out the actions contained in the strategy as part of the annual budgeting process. The *French-Language Services Strategy* is structured around the five priorities of the municipality's [Diversity & Inclusion Framework](#): inclusive public service, inclusive work environment, equitable employment, meaningful partnerships, accessible information and communication. It contains 33 action items set accordingly to community needs, internal resources and capacity as well as business planning directions identified in previous studies. The implementation of the strategy follows a three-phase model, with each phase laying foundation for the following.

## **DISCUSSION**

There are 18 actions items in the phase one implementation plan; 12 of them are recurring whereas six have pre-set completion timelines. Since the approval of the strategy in June 2021, all 12 recurring action items have been incorporated into the daily work of French Services, within the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO. Three of the six actions items with pre-set timelines have been completed and the other three are currently in progress. Below is the detailed progress of the 18 phase one action items:

### **Inclusive Public Service**

- French Services and Programs

French Services has created the *2021-22 Inventory of the Municipality's French-language Services* to establish the baseline data regarding French services offered by the municipality. Based upon this document, a list of municipal services available in French has been published on the municipality's website in both [English](#) and [French](#) as a resource for residents. An internal version has been published on the intranet as a resource for staff. The inventory will be updated regularly.

Between May 2021 and March 2022, with the funding obtained through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services*, French Services supported the translation from English to French of 14 communication items (21,030 words) produced by the municipality<sup>1</sup>. The translated documents<sup>2</sup> covered a variety of service areas to ensure accessible municipal information for the local Acadian and Francophone population and their participation in municipal affairs. French Services will submit a new grant application for 2022/23, to obtain more funding to continue the offering of translation services.

- Internal Resources and Capacity

Between June 2021 and March 2022, with the funding obtained through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services*, French Services offered a total of 77 seats to municipal employees to participate in part-time French classes provided by the Université Sainte-Anne in the 2021 Summer, Fall and 2022 Winter terms. Participants were from all municipal business units as well as Halifax Public Libraries. The average completion rate<sup>3</sup> was 79.2 per cent. According to the evaluations, the majority of participants stated that the skills learned were useful for their work and anticipated using them at work. The 2022 Spring session is currently in progress and French Services will submit a new grant application for 2022/23, to obtain more funding to continue offering the French language training.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include translation work completed by business units with their respective budget, such as PSAs and press releases.

<sup>2</sup> Major initiatives include Youth Services Plan Survey, participation of 311 in the 2021 French Services Fair, update and expansion of the French micro-site, Transit Student Pass Pilot Program, 2021 Resident Survey, Women and Gender Equity Engagement, Halifax Public Libraries Community Kiosks Handbills and Read to Me Handbill, REC recruitment poster.

<sup>3</sup> The completion of a session requires a minimum of 70% attendance for the 10-class session.

French Services developed a three-hour corporate training module, *Parlez-vous français? – Understanding Acadian and Francophone Communities and French Services* to raise cultural awareness around the Acadian and Francophone community among municipal employees. The training module has completed its piloting and will be launched in August 2022.

French Services developed a *French-Language Guide for Municipal Employees* and a *French-Language Guide for Municipal Councillors*, with a cheat-sheet of French one-liners, bilingual templates and glossary for office work, as well as information about trainings and translation services. They are downloadable from intranet as a resource for municipal staff to support French service delivery.

- Corporate Policies

French Services, in consultation with Corporate Communications, has reshaped the action item on creating corporate French-language services policies, based upon the identified need for a more inclusive approach to create a multilingual services policy, including translation guidelines. As a result, French Services is currently leading a working group to create a multilingual policy, which aims to support linguistically diverse residents in accessing municipal information, help business units understand why, when and how to provide information in languages other than English (including the Mi'kmaq language, American and Québec sign languages and Braille). The working group has completed a jurisdictional scan and established a menu of best practices. The next step is to conduct an internal assessment to understand the current practices, capacity, potential gaps, areas of improvement and plans in terms of multilingual services within each business unit. The progress follows the pre-set timeline (2-3 years) for this action item.

### **Inclusive Work Environment**

- Support Tools

Apart from the French-Language guides mentioned above, French Services delivered eight virtual French lunch and learn sessions between June 2021 and March 2022 to support municipal employees' French learning. The topics included online resources and tools, French pronunciation, providing French services in person and by phone, how to use *Bescherelle* and French conversations. The recording of these sessions has been stored in a shared folder accessible to all French training participants.

### **Equitable Employment**

- French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines

Between June 2021 and March 31, 2022, French Services worked with Client Services, Human Resources (HR), to collect input from impacted HR service areas (in particular Client Services, Total Rewards and Labour Relations) regarding the *French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines* initially drafted by HR in 2016. The drafted guidelines have been revised and updated and presented to the HR management team. HR will work with the French Services to plan the roll-out in May/June 2022 to meet the 1-year timeline.

- Bilingual Job Postings for Positions with French-language Requirements

Creating bilingual job postings and job descriptions for positions with French-language requirements is part of the *French-Language Services HR Guidelines*. While the drafted guidelines are pending implementation, no job postings or job description have yet been made available in French. However, in March 2022, French Services worked with Sackville Sports Stadium to create and promote a bilingual Expression of Interest notice for the French-speaking recreational program leader position for the pilot French recreational

program project at the stadium<sup>4</sup>. Two candidates from the Acadian and Francophone community were hired for the position.

- Workforce Building

Between June 2021 and March 2022, Client Services, HR, with the support of French Services, worked with YMCA-French Services to deliver two information sessions on municipal job opportunities (one general and the other targeting summer REC jobs) and two workshops (one on resume building and the other on interview skills) to Francophone and bilingual job seekers. A total of 43 individuals attended the sessions.

### **Meaningful Partnerships**

- Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership (HAFP)

French Services has continued to support the work of the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership. Starting from September 2021, the French Services Advisor has served as the municipality's representative, co-chairing the partnership and reporting quarterly to the CAO regarding the partnership's work. Between June 2021 and March 2022, four partnership meetings took place, all well attended with around 20 attendees. Councillor Pam Lovelace, Regional Council's liaison with the Acadian and Francophone community attended the meeting in September 2021 to meet with participants. The partnership meetings have been a major opportunity for members to share news from respective organizations, explore opportunities of partnerships and discuss key community issues. Four subcommittees have been created to address pressing community needs: communications, employment, community space and Francophonie Month celebration (ad hoc). The French Services Advisor sits on the latter three subcommittees.

- Partnerships between the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Acadian and Francophone community

Between June 2021 and March 2022, municipal business units have established partnerships with the local Acadian and Francophone community to implement the following initiatives:

- 2021 Acadian Day celebration  
Civic Events, the Mayor's Office and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO worked with the local community organization Conseil Communautaire du Grand Havre to organize a flag raising and a concert at Grand Parade to celebrate the 2021 Acadian Day, which attracted around 350-400 attendees.
- 2022 Francophonie Month/International Francophonie Day celebration  
The Mayor's Office and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO worked with Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre to organize a flag raising in recognition of the International Francophonie Day (March 20, 2022) (not open to public due to COVID restrictions). A short video including the flag raising, the reading of the municipal proclamation and a performance by local Acadian artists has been published: <https://youtu.be/xjzJXn7cg4g>
- Pilot project: French recreational program at Sackville Sports Stadium  
The Community Space subcommittee of the HAFP worked with the CSAP school École du Grand Portage and the Sackville Sports Stadium to offer French recreational programs in 2022 spring as a pilot project. The partners have worked closely to conduct community engagements, design and promote the program, and recruit the program leaders. Five French programs (two soccer classes, two arts and crafts classes and one open gym class) will be offered at the stadium from May to

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<sup>4</sup> More details about this pilot project can be found below among the partnerships between the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Acadian and Francophone community.

June 2022. The registration has been very good, with three classes full and two classes with limited availability.

- Representation on municipal boards, committees and commissions

Between June 2021 and March 2022, French Services supported the translation and promotion of communication materials related to two recruitment campaigns for municipal boards, committees and commissions to reduce barriers for French-speaking residents seeking to participate in municipal governance: the 2021 fall recruitment for municipal boards, committees and commissions and the 2022 recruitment for the District Boundary Resident Review Panel.

### **Accessible Information and Communication**

- French micro-site

Between June 2021 and March 2022, French Services updated and expanded the French micro-site (Halifax.ca/fr) to include the following new webpages:

- Districts and Councillors (32 pages)
- Newcomers Guide (11 pages)
- French Services (six pages)
- 2021 Canada Day and Bedford Days (two pages)
- Women and Gender Equity Strategy (one page)

French Services received and answered five French inquiries regarding municipal services via the generic email [french\\_francais@halifax.ca](mailto:french_francais@halifax.ca) between June 2021 and March 2022.

- Bilingual PSAs and Press Releases

All public service announcements and press releases produced by the municipality, except for those issued by Halifax Regional Police have continued to be issued in both English and French since 2018. Corporate Communications is currently exploring ways to make the availability of French translation of PSAs more visible and accessible in the news section of halifax.ca.

- Municipal Information

Between June 2021 and March 2022, municipal business units provided municipal information to the Acadian and Francophone community through the following initiatives:

- 311 participated in the 2021 French Services Fair Dans Ma Ville by creating a [promotional video](#) in French. The video received 2800 views and 19 interactions (reactions, comments and shares).
- Client Services, HR, offered two information sessions on municipal job opportunities to bilingual and Francophone job seekers. The sessions were delivered in English with French services support.
- Procurement delivered a presentation on How to Do Business with the municipality to members of Chambre de commerce francophone d'Halifax. The presentation was delivered in English with French services support.

- Community consultation

Between June 2021 and March 2022, the following two community consultations were conducted in French with the Acadian and Francophone community:

- Corporate Planning (Finance & Asset Management) worked with French Services to translate the 2021 Resident Survey as well as the promotional materials into French and promote the survey within the Acadian and Francophone community. The results showed an equitable participation from residents that self-identify as Acadians or Francophones. (2.9 per cent of respondents self-identified as Francophones, whereas 3.1 per cent of the municipality's population are Francophones according to the 2016 Census.)
- As part of the pilot project to offer French recreational programs at community REC centres, French Services worked with the Community Space subcommittee of the HAFP, the CSAP school École du Grand Portage and Sackville Sports Stadium to develop a bilingual survey to understand French-speaking families' preferences for French recreational programs. The Survey received close to 270 responses and the results helped to shape the design of the 2022 Spring French recreational programs at Sackville Sports Stadium.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Funding pertaining to the implementation of the French-Language Services Strategy in 2021/22 came from a combination of external grants through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services* and the 2021/22 municipal operating budget, in particular the annual budget of Corporate Communications for the French translation of PSAs, news releases and municipal statements as well as the operating budget of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO for other initiatives related to the strategy.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was required.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

No attachments.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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