



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

Item No. 5
Halifax Regional Council
June 20, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 17, 2023

SUBJECT: **2022/23 French-Language Services Strategy Annual Update Report**

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 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

(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

BACKGROUND

On June 29, 2021, Regional Council approved the *French-Language Services Strategy* (the Strategy) and directed the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out the actions contained in the Strategy as part of the annual budgeting process. The 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 according 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 (10 years in total), with each phase laying the foundation for the next. 2022/23 was the second year of the phase one implementation of the Strategy. The progress achieved in the first year (2021/22) of phase one was reported in the [2021-22 French-Language Services Strategy Annual Update](#). This report provides a detailed update on the progress of the second year (2022/23) of the phase one implementation.

DISCUSSION

Of the 33 action items outlined in the Strategy, 18 are identified in the phase one implementation plan; 12 of them are recurring, whereas six have pre-set completion timelines.

By the end of the first year of the phase one implementation (2021/22):

- All 12 recurring action items had been incorporated into the daily work of the French Services division within the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO.
- Three of the six actions items with pre-set timelines had been completed.

Within the second year of the phase one implementation (2022/23):

- The 12 recurring action items continued to be part of the daily work of the French Services division.
- One additional action item with a pre-set timeline was completed and incorporated into the regular work of French Services.
- The remaining two action items are currently on track to be completed by the end of year three (2023/24) when phase one concludes.

Below is the detailed progress of the phase one action items advanced within the 2022/23 fiscal year:

Inclusive public service

- *French services and programs*

Between April 2022 and March 2023, with the funding obtained through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services*, French Services supported the translation of 20 communication items (22,242 words) produced by the municipality¹ from English to French. The translated documents covered a variety of service areas, such as the 2022 and 2023 Citizenship Award Program, 2022 Canada Day information, the Community Grant Survey, the Oval Regulations, the Women and Gender Equity Strategy engagement materials, the 2022 Resident Survey, the Halifax Transit service change information, documents for the development of French content for the New in Halifax website, job postings requiring French language capacity, among others. Implementing translation services has enhanced access to municipal information for the local Acadian and Francophone population, encouraging participation in municipal affairs.

¹ This does not include translation work completed by business units with their respective budget, such as PSAs and news releases.

- *Internal resources and capacity*

Between April 2022 and March 2023, with the funding obtained through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services*, French Services offered a total of 101 seats to municipal employees to participate in part-time French classes provided by the Université Sainte Anne in the 2022 spring, summer, fall and 2023 winter sessions. Participants were from all municipal business units, as well as from Halifax Public Libraries. The average course completion² rate was 79 per cent. According to the evaluations, almost all participants stated that the skills learned were useful for, and applicable to, their work.

The three-hour corporate training module, *Parlez-vous français? – Understanding Acadian and Francophone Communities and French Services* was launched in August 2022 and offered three times between April 2022 and March 2023. A total of 32 municipal employees participated in the training. The training module was intended to raise cultural awareness around the Acadian and Francophone communities among municipal employees and offer resources and tools for French services provision. The content of the workshop was updated following the release of the 2021 Census data in August and November 2022, to reflect new trends in linguistic demography in the Halifax region.

- *Corporate policies*

French Services continued to lead the working group to create a corporate multilingual policy. Following the jurisdictional scan completed in 2021/22, the working group completed an internal assessment via an [online Multilingual Services and Communications Feedback Form](#), which was shared with Directors or equivalents in all municipal business units. A total of 49 responses were received and a report was prepared to capture the analysis. A draft policy based upon the jurisdictional scan and the internal assessment is currently being prepared to meet the pre-set 3-year timeline for this action item.

Inclusive work environment

- *Bilingual signage (phase two objective)*

Although increasing bilingual signage at municipal properties and facilities is among the phase two objectives of the Strategy, proactive actions have been taken to support the application from the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial-Metro region to the Province's bilingual stop sign program. Regional Council supported the request and in March 2023, Public Works installed over 150 bilingual stop signs on municipal roads in the school neighbourhoods identified within the application. This implementation has extended the reach of the Province's bilingual stop sign program, which only funds the implementation of stop signs on provincial roads in neighbourhoods that are able to demonstrate the importance of Acadian culture and history, and/ or the importance of the French language, to their social, linguistic and cultural identity.

Equitable employment

- *French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines*

Due to some structural change in Human Resources (HR), an additional consultation was completed with the new Manager of Talent Acquisition to further revise and update the draft of the *French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines*. French Services is currently working with HR and Corporate Communications to plan the roll-out of the Guidelines to HR Business Partners and Talent Recruiters. This action item did not meet the pre-set one-year timeline but is on track to be completed by the end of the phase one implementation.

- *Bilingual job postings for positions with French language requirements*

² The completion of a session requires a minimum of 70 per cent attendance for the 10-class session.

In March 2023, French Services worked with Sackville Sports Stadium to create and promote a French job posting for the French REC program instructor position (within the framework of phase II of the pilot French recreational program project³ at the stadium). A total of six applications from the Acadian and Francophone community were received and one candidate from the community was hired for the position.

- *Workforce building*

Between April 2022 and March 2023, Client Services (HR), with the support of French Services, worked with YMCA-French Services to deliver one information session (focused on municipal job opportunities) and two workshops (one focused on resume building and the other on interview skills) to Francophone and bilingual job seekers. A total of 11 individuals attended the sessions. The Sackville Sports Stadium Programming Manager, with the support of French Services, participated in the bilingual summer job fair hosted by YMCA-French Services to promote municipal summer job opportunities to over 50 youth attendees.

Meaningful partnerships

- *Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership*

French Services continued to support the work of the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership (HAFP). Since September 2021, the French Services Advisor within the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO has served as the municipality's representative, co-chairing the partnership and reporting quarterly to the CAO regarding the partnership's work.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, five partnership meetings took place, all well-attended with approximately 20 attendees per session. A social activity was organized for members in June 2022, with 13 participants. Councillor Pam Lovelace, Regional Council's liaison with the Acadian and Francophone community attended the meeting in May 2022 to hear the presentation on the 2021/22 *French Services Strategy* update.

The partnership meetings have provided an important opportunity for members to share news from respective organizations, explore opportunities of partnerships and discuss key community issues. In addition to the existing four subcommittees (communications, employment, community space and Francophonie Month), one more subcommittee (Welcome) has been created to address the need for better coordination in the community's efforts in receiving newcomers (including both immigrants and migrants). The municipality's French Services Advisor sits on all subcommittees except the Communications Subcommittee.

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

Between April 2022 and March 2023, municipal business units have established partnerships with the local Acadian and Francophone community to implement the following initiatives:

- **2022 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 as part of the *Grand Oasis* concert series to celebrate Acadian Day in 2022, which gathered attendees from all backgrounds and officials from all levels of government.

- **2023 Francophonie Month/ International Francophonie Day celebration**

³ More details about the phase II of this pilot project can be found below among the partnerships between the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Acadian and Francophone community.

The Mayor's Office and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO worked with Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre to organize a flag raising at Grand Parade and an opening ceremony at the City Hall in recognition of the Francophonie Month in March 2023. The event featured the flag raising, the municipal proclamation reading and performances by local Francophone artists. Approximately 70 guests attended the indoor opening ceremony, including community stakeholders and officials from all levels of government.

- **Phase II of the pilot project: French REC programs at Sackville Sports Stadium**
The Community Space subcommittee of the HAFP continued to work with the CSAP school École du Grand Portage and the Sackville Sports Stadium to advance the phase II of the French REC pilot project. The stadium is planning to offer French recreational programs during the 2023 spring, summer and fall sessions. Evaluations will be conducted to explore best practices.
- **Francophone Volunteer Placement Program**
French Services supported the Employment subcommittee of the HAFP in implementing two pilot projects: one Francophone mentorship program, which aims to match Francophone business owners with mentors in related domains, and another Francophone volunteer placement program which aims to help Francophone job seekers gain local work experience. From January 30 to February 17, 2023, the Solid Waste division (within Public Works) successfully welcomed a Francophone volunteer seeking experience in waste management. The evaluations showed that both the employer and the volunteer benefited from this experience.
- *Representation on municipal boards, committees and commissions*

French Services supported the promotion of communication materials related to the 2022 fall recruitment for municipal boards, committees and commissions to reduce barriers for French-speaking residents seeking to participate in municipal governance.

Accessible information and communication

- *New in Halifax website*

With the funding obtained through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services*, French Services worked with the Halifax Local Immigration Partnership to make all static content on the *New in Halifax* website available in French: <https://newinhalifax.ca/fr/>. The website was created to provide practical information for newcomers moving to the Halifax region. The French site was launched in February 2023.

French Services received and answered six French inquiries regarding municipal services via the generic email french_francais@halifax.ca between April 2022 and March 2023.

- *Bilingual public service announcements and news releases*

All public service announcements (PSA) and news releases produced by the municipality, except for those issued by the Halifax Regional Police have continued to be issued in both English and French since 2018. Corporate Communications has implemented an icon (EN or EN FR) next to all PSA titles to indicate if the content is available in both official languages or in English-only. This has enhanced the visibility and accessibility of French content.

- *Municipal information*

Between April 2022 and March 2023, business units provided municipal information to the Acadian and Francophone community through the following initiatives:

- Client Services, HR, offered one information session on municipal job opportunities to bilingual and Francophone job seekers. The session was delivered in English with French Services support.
 - Civic Events delivered a presentation on municipal Event Grant Programs to members of the Halifax Acadian and Francophone Partnership. The presentation was delivered in English with French services support.
 - Planning and Development, in conferring with CSAP, has made available a French-language connection for any interactions related to planning work underway with the school boards.
- *Community Consultation*

Corporate Planning within the Finance & Asset Management business unit worked with French Services to translate the 2022 *Municipal Services Survey*, including related promotional materials, into French and promote the survey within the Acadian and Francophone community. The results showed an equitable participation from residents who self-identified as Francophones: 2.8 per cent of respondents self-identified as Francophones, whereas 3.2 per cent of the municipality's population have French as mother tongue according to the 2021 Census.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding pertaining to the implementation of the *French-Language Services Strategy* in 2022/23 came from a combination of external grants through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services* and the 2022/23 municipal operating budget, in particular the annual budget of Corporate Communications for the French translation of PSAs, news releases and municipal statements, the annual budget of Public Works for the implementation of bilingual stop signs around CSAP schools in the Halifax Regional Municipality, as well as the operating budget of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO for other initiatives related to the strategy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments.

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.

Report Prepared by: Ziyan Yang, French Services Advisor, Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO, CAO's Office, 902.233.6930
