

NO: R151

COUNCIL DATE: July 22, 2024

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **July 18, 2024**

FROM: **General Manager, Corporate Services**

FILE: **0625-01**

SUBJECT: **Multilingual Communications Policy**

RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Services Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information;
2. Endorse the Multilingual Communications Policy framework, as described in this report; and
3. Direct staff to proceed with developing and implementing a policy aimed at meeting translation needs and enhancing City communications and engagement with multilingual residents and individuals with limited proficiency in English.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Policy framework and to proceed with developing and implementing a policy to guide the City's multilingual communication practices in order to better serve and effectively communicate with Surrey's diverse population.

BACKGROUND

Surrey is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Canada and as such, Council and staff are committed to serving its citizens in the most inclusive manner possible. Recent census data shows that 38% of our residents speak English as a second language. As part of the City's commitment to effective governance, the City strives to reduce barriers to accessing information and ensuring that its communications and public engagement efforts reach as many residents as possible.

Recognizing this, on June 10, 2024, Council directed staff to draft a Policy to guide City communications that effectively supports reaching multilingual audiences or people with limited proficiency in English.

DISCUSSION

City staff conducted a review of Surrey's demographics based on the latest census data and performed a comprehensive assessment of current translation practices in other municipalities and organizations across British Columbia and Canada with similar demographics.

Surrey Demographics

Recent census data shows that 67% of Surrey's population is from a visible minority group. Visible minority as defined by the Employment Equity Act is "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". In Surrey, the most significant visible minority groups are: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Korean, and Japanese.

In addition, the languages spoken most often at home by Surrey residents are English at 56.4%, Punjabi at 18% and Mandarin at 4.1%. The language that is most often spoken at home is a strong indicator of how individuals within that household prefer to receive information and how it is most effectively comprehended.

City staff have also developed detailed community profiles, based on census data and statistics, that show languages spoken most often at home vary by location. For example, in the Guildford community, English (62.53%), Mandarin (8.92%) and Tagalog Filipino (5.03%) represent the top three languages spoken most often at home. In the Fleetwood community, English (57.82%), Punjabi (19.31%) and Mandarin (5.23%) are among the top three.

Further details on Surrey's demographics city-wide and by community/Town Centre are shown in Appendix "I".

Current Translation Capabilities

The City does not have a formal policy in place to guide multilingual communication practices and procedures. Informal internal practices allow for ad hoc translation requests at the discretion of senior marketing and communications staff.

The City offers free in-person and over-the-phone interpretation services in more than 170 languages, including Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese, French and many others. Online translation service on the City's website is also available through Google Translate.

The City's Interpretative Language Skills Team (ILST), comprised of City staff who speak multiple languages, provides interpretive support to City staff serving Surrey residents with limited proficiency in English, as needed.

Through the work of the City's Multicultural Media Relations Lead, City programs and services are highlighted and communicated through ethnic media, fostering understanding and engagement within Surrey's diverse communities.

A list of the City's existing communication channels, including their translation capabilities, are identified in Appendix "II".

Review of Comparable Organizations

City staff conducted interviews with comparative Canadian municipalities and organizations to gain insights and to review their relevant policies and practices.

Several strong common themes emerged from the research findings, including:

- A formal policy is recommended to guide multilingual communication efforts;
- A formal policy provides transparency and clarity for both staff and the public on how translation decisions are made;
- Flexibility within the policy framework is important for determining the best tactics and deliverables to address unique needs;
- Languages selected to be translated are anchored by the latest census data;
- Not all communications are translated – focus topics include critical information and key organizational priorities;
- There is a reliance on third-party language line services and 311 services where applicable; and
- A phased approach to policy implementation is recommended, starting with critical focus areas and expanding over time.

Policy Framework Recommendations

Based on best practices and research findings, City staff recommend the following scope and criteria for the multilingual policy framework:

- Translation may be triggered in languages that are spoken most often at home by 5% or more of Surrey residents, based on current census data (see Appendix ‘I’). Based on current census data, that would mean language translation in Punjabi would occur;
- Priority translation for topics that include critical information and major community initiatives;
- Consideration of translation for specific community/Town Centre priorities;
- Methods and mediums of communication will be determined by target audience and highest impact; and
- Phased implementation with ongoing evaluation and community feedback.

An illustrative example of how translation may be applied based on policy framework recommendations is shown in Appendix “III”.

FUNDING

Funding to support the initial phase of Multilingual Communications Policy development and implementation is available in the 2024 Corporate Services Operating Budget.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council endorse the policy framework and direct staff to proceed with developing and implementing a policy to guide the City’s multilingual communication practices, as described in this report.

Joey Jatinder Singh Brar
General Manager, Corporate Services

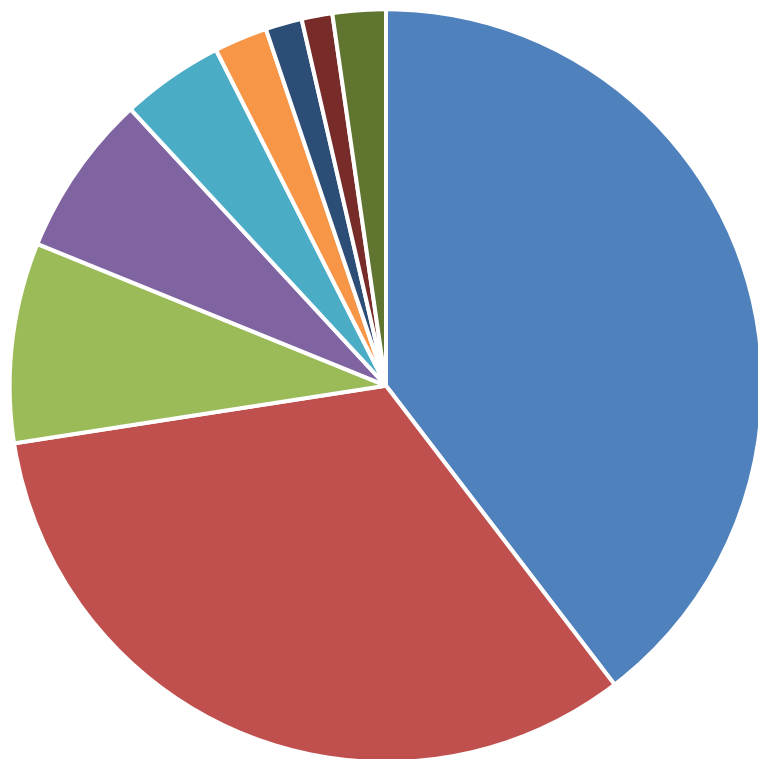
Appendix “I” – Surrey Demographics

Appendix “II” – Current Translation Capabilities

Appendix “III” – Example: Translation applied to recommended policy framework

Surrey Demographics – Visible Minorities

Recent Census: 67% of Surrey’s Population are from a visible minority group



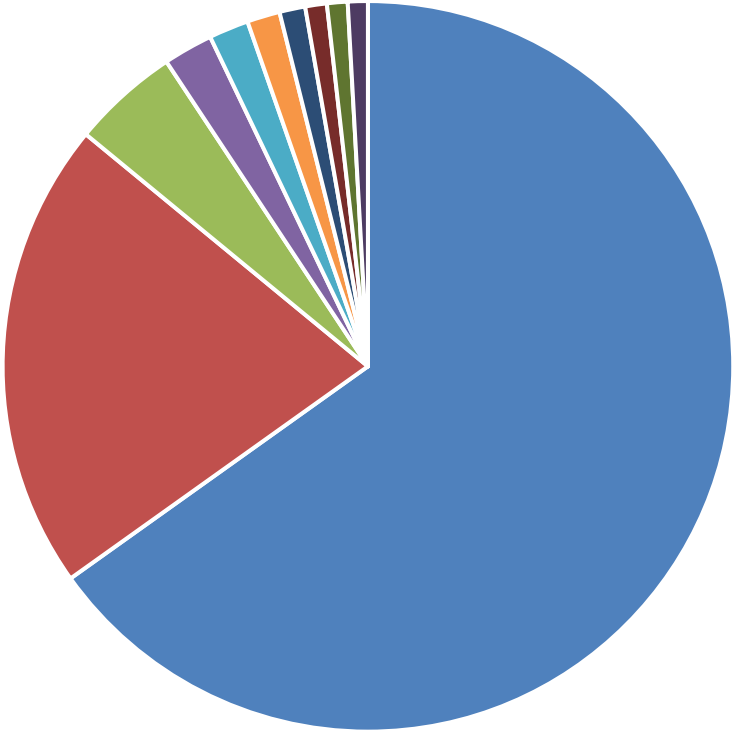
- South Asian
- Chinese
- Black
- Filipino
- Arab
- Latin American
- Korean
- Japanese
- Multiple visible minorities

Surrey City-wide		
Visible Minority Groups	Count	Rate
South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)	222820	39.6%
Chinese	185330	32.9%
Black	48350	8.6%
Filipino	39285	7%
Arab	24825	4.4%
Latin American	12870	2.3%
Korean	8830	1.6%
Japanese	7420	1.3%
Multiple visible minorities	12835	2.2%



Surrey Demographics – City Wide

Recent Census: 45% of Surrey's residents are immigrants with 38% residents speaking English as a second language.



- English
- Punjabi
- Mandarin
- Tagalog (Filipino)
- Hindi
- Korean
- Yue (Cantonese)
- Vietnamese
- Arabic
- Spanish

Surrey City-wide		
Top 10 Languages Spoken Most Often at Home	Count	Rate
English	318180	56.4%
Punjabi	101690	18.0%
Mandarin	23165	4.1%
Tagalog (Filipino)	10710	1.9%
Hindi	8595	1.5%
Korean	7100	1.3%
Yue (Cantonese)	5575	1.0%
Vietnamese	4670	0.8%
Arabic	4455	0.8%
Spanish	4315	0.8%



Surrey Demographics by Town Centre

Cloverdale	Count	Rate
English	56,925	81.54%
Punjabi	6,055	8.67%
Korean	1,070	1.53%
Tagalog (Filipino)	915	1.31%
Mandarin	780	1.12%
Spanish	495	0.71%
Hindi	450	0.64%
Yue (Cantonese)	370	0.49%
Vietnamese	340	0.29%
Arabic	205	0.29%

Fleetwood	Count	Rate
English	34,530	57.82%
Punjabi	11,530	19.31%
Mandarin	3,125	5.23%
Tagalog (Filipino)	1,685	2.82%
Korean	1,405	2.35%
Vietnamese	1,400	2.34%
Yue (Cantonese)	1,070	1.79%
Hindi	925	1.55%
Spanish	555	0.93%
Urdu	405	0.68%

Guildford	Count	Rate
English	36,985	62.53%
Mandarin	5,275	8.92%
Tagalog (Filipino)	2,975	5.03%
Punjabi	2,575	4.35%
Korean	2,360	3.99%
Yue (Cantonese)	1,340	2.27%
Arabic	1,135	1.92%
Vietnamese	1,130	1.91%
Spanish	535	0.90%
Hindi	465	0.79%

Newton	Count	Rate
English	70,055	49.10%
Punjabi	54,315	38.07%
Hindi	3,610	2.53%
Tagalog (Filipino)	2,220	1.56%
Urdu	2,150	1.51%
Mandarin	1,445	1.01%
Spanish	1,045	0.73%
Yue (Cantonese)	770	0.54%
Arabic	745	0.52%
Vietnamese	725	0.51%

South Surrey	Count	Rate
English	67,185	79.26%
Mandarin	10,345	12.20%
Punjabi	1,685	1.99%
Korean	930	1.10%
Yue (Cantonese)	865	1.02%
Spanish	455	0.54%
Russian	385	0.45%
Tagalog (Filipino)	335	0.40%
Min Nan (Chaochow, Teochow, Fukien, Taiwanese)	310	0.37%
Hindi	265	0.31%

Whalley (Includes City Centre)	Count	Rate
English	52,530	52.76%
Punjabi	26,310	26.43%
Tagalog (Filipino)	2,790	2.80%
Mandarin	2,465	2.48%
Hindi	2,385	2.40%
Yue (Cantonese)	1,365	1.37%
Spanish	1,320	1.33%
Arabic	1,225	1.23%
Vietnamese	1,145	1.15%
Korean	915	0.92%

Current Translation Capabilities

Channels and Tools	Translation Capabilities	Currently Translating
Website	Google translation; Information may not be accurate once translated	Yes
Earned media	Multicultural Media Relations Lead	Yes
Print Materials (in-house)	Third party translation	Ad hoc
Surveys	Third party translation	Ad hoc
Ads (digital and print)	Third party translation	Ad hoc
Video	Caption and voiceover	Ad hoc
Media releases	Appropriate font is needed	No
Social Channels (e.g. Instagram, X, Facebook)	Possible through images, video reel captions	No
E-News	No built-in translation option	No

Example: How translation may be applied based on policy framework recommendations

Campaign	Audience	Tactic/Activity	Languages that meet 5% threshold
Extreme weather warning	City-wide	Digital ads Radio	English Punjabi
Tax notice	City-wide	Print	English, Punjabi
Waste Drop Off/Illegal Dumping	Town Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guildford • Newton 	Print Radio	Guildford: English, Mandarin, Tagalog Newton: English, Punjabi
Summer Heat Relief	City-wide	Radio	English, Punjabi
2025 Budget Engagement	Town Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whalley • South Surrey 	Survey	Whalley: English, Punjabi South Surrey: English, Mandarin
Swim safety	City-wide	Video	English; Punjabi
Senior's Week in Surrey	Focus will be on age demographics	Printed materials	Depends on specific target audience

