

THE AGENCY FOR CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

POLICY MANUAL

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CROSS REFERENCE:

2.1: Client-Service Standards,
2.2.2 Bilingualism Code of Practice
2.3.1: Communications

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AUTHORITY:

Board of Directors

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SUBJECT:

Bilingual Services

1. Guiding Principle

The Agency's client co-operatives, their members and the general public are entitled to service in the official language of their choice. The Agency will actively invite all parties it communicates with to express their language preference and will respect that choice.

2. Oral Communications

- 2.1. The Agency will make every effort to conduct oral communications in the official language preferred by the client, individual or organization in question.
- 2.2. The Agency will normally assign a French-speaking relationship manager to a client co-operative whose preferred language of business is French. If this is not possible, the Agency will make arrangements to ensure that the other provisions of this policy are respected and that all communications with the co-operative take place in French.
- 2.3. All Agency offices will use automated telephone answering and call transfer to enable callers to acquire information or to reach the appropriate person and conduct business in their choice of either English or French.
- 2.4. Bilingual employees are required to record voice-mail greetings in both English and French.

- 2.5. The Agency will ensure that any independent contractor hired to provide services in connection with a francophone Agency client, such as a building inspector or appraiser, can communicate effectively with the co-operative in French. If necessary, the Agency may meet this requirement by engaging a contractor from another region or arranging for a French-speaking staff member to accompany the contractor on site.

3. Written Communications and Materials

- 3.1 The provisions below apply to all written materials, whether printed or made available through electronic media.
- 3.2 The Agency will correspond with client co-operatives, their members and the general public in the correspondent's preferred official language.
- 3.3 Staff auto-responder e-mail messages must be posted in both English and French.
- 3.4 Agency correspondence intended for broader circulation among client co-operatives or other stakeholders will be distributed in both official languages.
- 3.5 The Agency will issue reports to client co-operatives in their preferred official language, providing translations as necessary of reports concerning the client commissioned from third parties.
- 3.6 All Agency forms and resource documents intended for client use or public distribution will be made available in both official languages.
- 3.7 The Agency's annual report, descriptions of its services or programs, media releases and any other materials intended for broad distribution among clients, other stakeholders or the general public will be published in both official languages.
- 3.8 All material produced by the federal government and published on the Agency's website will appear in both official languages. The Agency will normally publish documents from other third parties only in the official language or languages in which they were made available.
- 3.9 The Agency's human-resources policies, whether adopted by the Board of Directors or by management, all other board-adopted policies, and summaries of minutes of board meetings will be published in both official languages. French versions of all other management-adopted policies will be made available upon request.
- 3.10 The Agency will release the French and English versions of all written communications simultaneously, except in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.11 The Agency may post Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in a single official language, if the work for which proposals are requested will be conducted largely or exclusively

in that language. The RFP must include a statement in the other language that a translation of the RFP will be made available upon request and that the Agency will consider a proposal submitted in the other language.

4. Meetings and Events

- 4.1 The Agency will conduct its meetings with individual client co-operatives in the co-op's preferred official language.
- 4.2 The Agency will arrange for simultaneous interpretation in French and English at any public meeting it holds, or otherwise ensure that unilingual attendees can follow and participate fully in the proceedings, including any discussion.
- 4.3 The Board of Directors will conduct its meetings in English, providing individual interpretation into French, and from French to English, as necessary.
- 4.4 When participating at events sponsored by bilingual organizations, the Agency will provide handouts and make audiovisual presentations in both official languages. For events sponsored by unilingual organizations, the Agency will provide handouts, on request, in the other official language.

5. Language Capacity of Staff

In order to ensure that the requirements of this policy are met, the Agency will set required levels of proficiency in the employee's second official language for all employment positions.

6. Guidance to Agency Staff

The Agency will provide appropriate guidance to assist staff in observing this policy.

7. Monitoring and Complaints

- 7.1 The Agency will regularly evaluate its effectiveness in providing bilingual services, as described in this policy, through the processes developed for evaluating its client-centered service.
- 7.2 A client or member of the public with a complaint about language of service may invoke the Agency's published dispute-resolution procedure.
- 7.3 The Agency will refer to CMHC any complaints it receives under the *Official Languages Act* before the end of the following business day.