

# THE AGENCY FOR CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

## POLICY MANUAL

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**SUBJECT:**

Bilingual Services

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### 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 or member of the public.
- 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-op 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 voicemail greetings of unilingual anglophone relationship managers will give the caller the option of talking with a French-speaking relationship manager.

- 2.6 The voicemail greeting of other unilingual Anglophone employees will give the caller the option of talking with the French-speaking receptionist, who can direct them to the staff member who can best meet their needs.
- 2.7 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 in both English and French.
- 3.4 Correspondence that the Agency intends 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 co-op 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 will publish its annual report in both official languages, as well as descriptions of its services or programs, media releases, and any other materials intended for broad distribution among clients, other stakeholders or the general public.
- 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 All Agency policies and summaries of minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors will be published in both official languages.
- 3.10 The Agency will release French and English versions of all written communications simultaneously, except in exceptional circumstances.

#### **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 its public meetings, 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**

The Agency will meet the requirements of this policy and honour its commitment to client-centered service through human-resource policies that set levels of proficiency in the employee's second official language for all 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.

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7.3 The Agency will refer to CMHC any complaints it receives under the *Official Languages Act*.