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French Language Services Implementation Plan

Metrolinx 2014-2015

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Introduction

The *French Language Services Act* (FLSA) gives Francophones the right to receive services from the Ontario government and its agencies in French. As a result, Metrolinx and its divisions currently provide public-facing information in both official languages. As a government agency, Metrolinx is committed to ensure that French-language services are evident, readily available, and easily accessible and publicized in both English and French.

The current FLSA-designated areas served by Metrolinx are Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Hamilton and Barrie. Metrolinx has gone beyond these designated areas and implemented existing solutions for providing our services in French to all areas of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) that we serve. These service standards will be upheld in any area of Ontario that is served by Metrolinx, regardless of whether it falls within the FLSA-designated service area.

A *Plan to Implement French Language Services at GO Transit* was created in 2005 with follow-up status reports issued yearly between 2008-2012. In 2009, Metrolinx merged with GO Transit, the regional public transit service. With the addition of Union Pearson Express and PRESTO as operational divisions, we have expanded the French Language Services Plan to encompass all operational and corporate areas of Metrolinx.

This past year saw an unprecedented focus and interest in French language services at Metrolinx. We remain committed to seeking out new and improved ways of communicating with our customers, stakeholders and communities. That commitment includes ensuring that we are providing information in both official languages.

SECTION 1 – FRONT LINE SERVICES

Metrolinx and its operating divisions provide several front-line services to customers in the GTHA. Hundreds of staff support the operation of GO Transit transportation system, the implementation of the PRESTO fare card and the planning and launch of UP Express.

1.1 GO TRANSIT/UP EXPRESS CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE

GO Transit's Customer Contact Centre employs approximately 60 front-line and tier 2 Representatives. These staff answer inquiries of individuals who call the 1-800 GO Transit or 1-844-GET-ON-UP (438-6687) numbers and their local number equivalents. Some also handle escalated customer complaints. Currently, there are four bilingual agents in the Contact Centre. When all bilingual agents are busy, calls are rerouted to English speaking agents who will use an interpretive service (Voiance Language) to provide services in French (the Interpretive Service is used to ensure continuous access to French Language Services). All existing Contact Centre staff have been trained on how to use the translation service and all new hires are trained during orientation. To enhance and increase the provision of French language services at GO Transit/UP Express, GO/UP will prioritize hiring bilingual individuals when filling Contact Centre vacancies in the future.

1.2 PRESTO CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

The PRESTO Contact Centre functions much like the GO Transit Customer Contact Centre except that a third-party vendor, Accenture, operates the Service Centre.

Bilingual Customer Service Representatives provide French language services for all hours of operation for the PRESTO Contact Centre.

Although highly unlikely, in the event that a French-speaking representative is unavailable, individuals who call 1-8-PRESTO-123 (1-877-378-6123) can request assistance in French by following the prompts in the interactive voice response (IVR) telephone system. A Customer Service Centre employee can then assist a caller in French by initiating translation services through the multi-language translation service provider CanTalk. All PRESTO Customer Service Centre employees have been trained on how to use the CanTalk translation service and all new hires are trained during initial orientation.

1.3. STATION ATTENDANTS

Attendants at GO Transit train stations and bus terminals are able to provide their services to customers in French by utilizing the three-way calling interpretive service. This solution was implemented in 2010 and uses dedicated telephone hardware to provide French speaking customers with an interpreted call involving a station attendant and a bilingual GO Transit Customer Contact Centre employee or external interpretive services agent. A sign on the station attendant's window advertises that this service is available.

All existing Station Attendants have been trained on how to use the three-way calling system. This training is also included in every new Station Attendant's orientation package. Instructions on how to use the three-way calling system are also posted on the dedicated three-way calling telephone equipment in each station and bus terminal.

1.4 UNION STATION

At Union Station, there is a Ticket Sales Area and Customer Service Office staffed by GO Transit employees. In November 2011, the three-way calling system was installed in the Ticket Sales Area located inside the Bay Concourse (recently moved to York Concourse) to allow staff to provide services to Francophones as required. All Ticket Sales staff were trained to use the system at the time of installation.

1.5 TRANSIT SAFETY

The Safety and Security division of Metrolinx includes the front-line positions of Customer Service Attendant (CA) and Transit Safety Officer (TSO). It is the responsibility of these staff to ensure the safety of our passengers, the security of our facilities and the enforcement of Metrolinx by-laws and other requirements under the Criminal Code.

Any tickets, notices of violations or warnings issued by TSO's are in bilingual format. Additionally, messages transmitted on the Transit Safety Dispatch 1-877 number are recorded in both French and English and operators have been trained to use the three-way calling system to communicate with Francophone customers.

SECTION 2 – CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

Metrolinx employs several different methods to communicate information to customers and the general public about programs, services, and projects offered by Metrolinx and its operating divisions. Corporate websites, social media, news releases, public meetings, station announcements and signage are all mediums utilized by Metrolinx to ensure that residents of the GTHA are kept in the know.

2.1 WEBSITES

2.1.1 METROLINX

The Metrolinx external website contains information about the agency and its practices as a whole. Information about the Board of Directors and Executive Group as well as regional planning initiatives and transit projects are posted on the website.

The Metrolinx website is available in French and mirrors the English site except for the following areas:

- tender information;
- job postings
- technical or third-party documents.

The generic wording on these pages has been translated and a telephone number provided to the reader if they wish to obtain more information about the content of these pages in French. All Board meeting agendas and Board materials are posted in both English and French.

In April 2015, we launched a section on the Metrolinx website that details our commitment to French communications and provided a contact,

frenchlanguageservices@metrolinx.com, for Francophone customers to reach out to with questions or suggestions.

2.1.2 GO TRANSIT

The GO Transit external website provides information to the public about our train and bus services, including fare and scheduling information, real-time service updates and how to contact us regarding customer service issues.

All information on the GO Transit website, except for the “Careers” page and real-time service updates, are available in French. Although the generic GO Transit “Careers” page has been translated, it is linked to the Metrolinx “Careers” page which displays job postings in English-only. The job postings will remain in English-only, except for designated bilingual jobs as stated above, and a telephone number is provided to the reader if they wish to obtain more information about the job postings in French.

2.1.3 PRESTO

The PRESTO website provides information to the public about the PRESTO card and allows customers to purchase, activate and register their PRESTO card. The entire PRESTO website is available in French and the customer has the option of purchasing, activating and registering the card in French.

2.1.4 UP Express

The UP Express website provides information and status updates to the public about the express rail service between Union Station and Pearson Airport that was launched in June 2015. Information is available in both English and French.

2.1.5 SMART COMMUTE

The Smart Commute website provides information to the public about the Smart Commute program and provides employers and commuters with the tools to explore different commuting choices in the GTHA. Information is available in both English and French including for the online Smart Commute tool, which allows commuters to find a carpool partner and determine the fastest and most efficient travel method for their trip.

2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

Metrolinx and its operating divisions (GO Transit, UP Express and PRESTO) utilize social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Flickr to communicate general service and marketing information to customers in real time.

Metrolinx and its divisions have dedicated English and French social media accounts. Replies to Facebook posts and tweets are provided in their language of origin.

Metrolinx also has a channel on YouTube which airs videos about our services and other transit topics. All videos have either a French version or French captions. All Flickr photos include bilingual captions.

2.3 SUBSCRIBER SERVICES/ONLINE TOOLS

2.3.1 ON THE GO

On the GO is a subscription service that allows customers to sign up for timely, customized news about the GO Transit service they use. Once registered, the customer receives email or text message alerts about any major delays, cancellations, new schedules, service improvements, construction notices, and other news and information. Customers have the option to register for the 'On the GO' service in either English or French and will receive emails or text message alerts in French.

In 2012, part of our FLS compliance plan, was to use Google translate to be able to issue real-time On the GO alerts in both English and French simultaneously. Recent concerns about the quality of automated translations have resulted in GO adopting a remedial plan. GO Customer Care has secured a vendor that can accommodate real-time translations within a 7-10 minute turnaround. The new vendor is expected to be on-board fall 2015.

2.3.2 LET GO KNOW

Let GO Know is GO Transit's online advisory panel. Customers can sign up to complete surveys and polls about GO Transit improvement initiatives and projects. The panel is hosted on a website by a third-party under the banner 'Let GO Know'. The website is available in French under the banner *Parler à GO* and Francophone customers can sign up and participate in surveys and/or customer feedback sessions in French. Currently, we have six panel members who have subscribed to the French panel.

2.3.3 GO TRANSIT APPS: GO Mobile & GO Tracker

GO Mobile allows customers to view GO train and bus schedules on their mobile devices. GO Tracker is a mobile-enabled web application that gives passengers the real-time status of their GO trains. Customers can use GO Tracker on their mobile device or computer, which included estimated train departure times and platform information. Both apps are available in English and French.

2.4 MARKET RESEARCH

Metrolinx performs market research routinely with customers and members of the public for both tactical and strategic research needs.

All quantitative research (i.e. surveys/polls) is undertaken in English and French through the Let GO Know panel or stand-alone website surveys (in-house or third-party). When field teams are deployed to solicit participation, they hand out either a card which directs users online to complete the survey, or a hardcopy survey to be completed on the spot. Both the cards and online surveys are bilingual and field teams carry French copies of the survey. Qualitative research (i.e. focus groups, interviews) is often conducted with customers to help inform research design and areas of opportunity. Focus group recruitment is either done

through the use of a subscriber list (Let GO Know panel) or household telephone calls. While Francophone customers may be solicited to participate, qualitative research sessions are carried out in English only due to the challenges associated with recruiting sufficient GO Francophone customers to fill a group (usually 10-12). While moderation of these sessions is offered in English only, all customers have the choice to participate if invited.

2.5 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Metrolinx's Strategic Communications division ensures that our customers are always 'in the know'. Anytime a Metrolinx or divisional media advisory or news release is issued, a link to both the English and French version is provided. Additionally, there are over 40 French media outlets that Strategic Communications provides with media advisories and news releases.

All GO Transit publications available at GO stations are in bilingual format. These include mini-schedules, timetables, contact cards, newsletters (GO News), and seasonal communications such as 'GO Explore'.

Strategic Communications provides corporate-wide guidelines and standards for the provision of communications in French on the corporate intranet site.

In December 2014, an internal French Advisory Committee was created to work with all Metrolinx divisions, including GO Transit, in order to increase availability and accessibility of quality of French communications.

Strategic Communications is in the process of hiring a second Bilingual Communications Coordinator who will help enhance our FLSA compliance and quality control of French communications.

2.6 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Metrolinx often holds open meetings with the general public and other stakeholders to provide information about and receive feedback on various Metrolinx infrastructure projects, products and services.

Currently there are varying degrees of French language services provided at Metrolinx public consultations. Stakeholder events hosted by Strategic Communications are held in English-only and presentation materials are translated into French and posted on the website. The GTS Project team provides its storyboard material in French in the form of a handout, however all verbal presentations are English-only. While at public information sessions for GO Transit environmental assessments, an interpreter is available to translate the entire session into French if needed.

2.7 SIGNAGE

2.7.1 Static Signage

All static signage at all GO Transit properties is available in bilingual format. Construction notices at public GO Transit facilities are currently posted in both English and French. Signage at the Metrolinx Head Office and both GTS Community Offices is bilingual.

2.7.2 Dynamic Signage

Union Station bus and rail platform dynamic signage has been displaying bilingual train and bus service status information since June 2009. All other GO Transit stations have been displaying service status information on LCD screens in English-only.

All LCD monitors at GO Train stations (including Union Station) that display real time service status and platform information include a banner at the bottom for ad-hoc messaging usually reserved for emergency content. Due to the emergency nature of this, content will be displayed in English-only until such time as French translations become available. GO Customer Contact is in the process of securing a vendor that can accommodate real-time translations on a 24/7 basis. For any planned messaging, this content is displayed in English and French.

All digital signage at UP Express stations (Union, Bloor, Weston and Pearson International Airport) is bilingual. On-board infotainment and customer magazine are bilingual as well.

SECTION 3 – HUMAN RESOURCES

The Metrolinx Human Resources division is responsible for the recruitment, compensation, organizational development and health and safety of all Metrolinx employees.

3.1 RECRUITMENT

In an effort to attract bilingual job candidates, Metrolinx currently advertises fluency in French language as an asset for the following twelve (12) positions:

- Manager, Community Relations – GTS
- Community Relations & Issues Specialist – GTS
- Communications Leader
- Director Community & Stakeholder Relations
- Vice President, Strategic Communications
- Customer Contact Representative
- Manager, Corporate Communications & Media Relations
- Manager, Customer Care
- Customer Service Coordinator
- Customer Service Representative
- Transportation Planner
- Senior Advisor, Business Relationships

Currently there are four designated bilingual positions in Metrolinx, Bilingual Communications Coordinators (2), Administrative Assistant (Office of the CEO) and Community and Stakeholder Relations Specialist.

3.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Information about FLSA and employees obligations under the Act was added to the new hire orientation presentation in February 2012. Front-line employees are provided with additional training on the three-way calling system and other methods to provide French Language services as detailed in Section 1 of this plan.

The Corporate Continuing Education Policy encourages employees to develop their French language abilities by offering full reimbursement for the cost of enrolling in French language courses.

CONCLUSION

The Metrolinx FLS Coordinator will continue to work with all Metrolinx divisions and departments to ensure French language communications are available system-wide to our customers. Also, the Metrolinx Coordinator will closely work with Ministry of Transportation's FLS Coordinator on any arising FLS matters.

Internally, we will continue to raise awareness among our employees of Metrolinx's commitment to French language, as well as compliance with the FLSA. The FLS Advisory Committee will be consulted on a regular basis to share information on best practices, tools and resources regarding FLS implementation.

Overall, Metrolinx remains fully committed to providing our customers with quality communications in both English and French.