



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

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Units
- Service Units

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- Long-Term Care Homes
& Services Part-Time
- Recreation Workers
Part-Time
- Unit B Part-Time

*Toronto Community
Housing Corporation*

**SERVING OUR
MEMBERS
SINCE
1942**

EX10.4.1

December 1, 2015

Mayor John Tory, Chair
and Members of the Executive Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of the Executive Committee:

RE: EX 10.4 – Translation Services for Members of Council

On behalf of the members of CUPE Local 79, I would like to express strong support for the Recommendation contained in EX 10.4 – Translation Services for Members of Council.

Local 79 represents members in the Divisions that are most reliant on translation and interpretation services, including 3-1-1 Toronto; Shelter, Support Housing and Administration; EMS; and Children’s Services. In fact, our members are on the front lines delivering services in communities across Toronto and they know exactly how diverse, multicultural and multilingual Toronto’s communities are. It is important to emphasize that the services our members deliver support day-to-day life in Toronto, which is sometimes easy to take for granted. But these services are often a lifeline and essential for making Toronto home. Among many other services, Toronto’s public service:

- Connects newcomers to housing and employment;
- Helps newcomers to establish businesses;
- Supports women and families escaping domestic violence;
- Assists young people looking for recreational opportunities that keep them safe and make them feel part of their communities; and
- Provides health services and education to promote mental and physical wellbeing.

In each of these cases, ensuring all Torontonians have access to services in the language with which they are most comfortable is vital to the success of the services our members deliver.

Councillor Wong-Tam deserves credit for raising the need for reliable translation services for Councillors. I know that she and many other Councillors are as committed to providing service and supporting residents as we are. However, I am glad that City staff, having met with Councillors to discuss translation issues have provided a broader recommendation than Member Motion 7.10 initially requested.

In particular, I noted with interest the fourth theme identified by Councillors, namely the “Need for Council to review the City’s multilingual policy... to ensure that the City’s translation and interpretation practices properly reflect the City’s motto of ‘Diversity Our Strength.’”

It is overwhelming ironic that, despite being one of the most diverse cities in the world, Toronto contracts out the bulk of its translation and interpretation services. In the case of over-the-phone interpretation, which is often where residents reach out when they have the most urgent needs, the contractor is a company in California. This is a reputational issue. The City's image – its brand – is undercut by this kind of contracting out. The City also risks being seen as an organization that will irrationally and ideologically contract out.

I would encourage this Committee to direct the City Manager's Office to include in their review a strategy for providing both translation and interpretation services, for Councillors and across Divisions, directly by City employees. The City should adopt a strategy to begin directly providing these services at the earliest opportunity. We note that the City's interpretation contract expires and enters its first option period at the end of this month and the translation contract expires and begins its first option period in May, 2016.

Direct provision of these services could start with a basic core of the most-frequently requested languages. This would allow the City to provide an anchor of directly-delivered services, which could then be supplemented through contracts obtained through a social procurement process and committing vendors to good jobs with living wages. The City could then work with Toronto's linguistic communities to identify future opportunities to expand direct delivery of translation services.

Providing translation and interpretation services directly, by bringing the services in-house has a number of advantages.

First, it would allow the City to increase its own capacity for delivering services. As the City continues to review and improve its customer service across a number of measures, being able to provide immediate, local, and fully integrated interpretation services would provide a considerable advantage.

Second, it would provide an opportunity to implement key recommendations of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, which was endorsed by this Committee and by City Council. Three recommendations contained in the strategy are particularly relevant.

11.1: Work with the private and public sectors to create effective paths to good careers for low-income youth.

16.2: Champion poverty reduction as a priority to Toronto residents, businesses, and the Provincial and Federal governments.

17.1: Embed mechanisms that assess the impact of budget choices on poverty reduction in City Council's decision-making process.

Taken together, these recommendations suggest that the City of Toronto should take translation and interpretation services as an opportunity to show leadership on poverty reduction, potentially without spending any new money. The combined initial value of the two most recent contracts for translation and interpretation services is over \$1.3 million. If this City provided translation services directly, at living wages, it would provide a career path for new Canadians. Providing services directly would create a tighter connection between newcomer services, good jobs, and poverty reduction, without spending additional dollars on new programs.

Toronto has become the most unequal city in Canada, and a major contributing factor is the reality that over half of us can't find a good job. We know that the difficulty of finding stable and secure jobs is even greater for newcomers. Without spending additional dollars, the City could capitalize on newcomers' linguistic resources, create an effective path to good careers and provide essential translation and interpretation services to Councillors and residents alike.

In short, reviewing Toronto's multilingual policy provides an opportunity to realize two goals at the same time: supporting the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and building better public services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tim Maguire', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Maguire
President